

THE WIRE

MUSIC NOW AND ALL WAYS

Issue 99 May 1992 £1.95 \$5.00

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MUST BE DESTROYED

• INSIDE •
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SHEILA JORDAN • NEGATIVLAND
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Cover: Our skeleton staff get ready for the wake. By Stephen Parker. Deathmask courtesy (what else!) the Becky Sinker Collection.

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NOW'S presents . . . THE NEWS SECTION

THE TIME

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distiller

WIDE BODYFIRM, LITTLE BODIES



• **THE LONDON MUSICIANS** Collective has announced a major event for May: the First Annual Festival of Experimental Music, which is set to take place on 20-24 May at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square WC1. Among many musicians taking part are Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, John Stevens, Catherine Jauniaux, Peter Blegvad, Lou Gare, ARC, Nicholas Collins, Die Trip Computer! Duel, Garden Of Noise, Ghosts Before Breakfast, John Law, Louis Moholo and Media Luz. Plus workshops, discussions, and seminars as well as the performances, all spread over five nights and two afternoons. Details from: 071 274 9009.

• **A FORMIDABLE** celebration of one of the great guitarists comes in the form of *Jim Hendrix: A Global Exhibition*, which opens at The Special Photographers Company in London on 1 May. Combining photography (by such as Dezo Hoffman and David Redfern), graphic work and film loops via banks of high-definition TV screens, Mr Hendrix will be before your very eyes in a variety of formats. The exhibition runs until the first week of June before a world tour.

BILL GOES TO BRUM

IN THE final concert of the 1991-92 Birmingham Jazz/Birmingham Contemporary Music Group Series, the BCMG will join forces with leading guitarist Bill Frisell in a new work composed by Mike Gibbs. It's a special commission from Birmingham Jazz to mark the city's Year Of Music in 1992. The concert will take place at the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire, on 17 May. Details from 021 235 4361.



Bill Frisell

Steven Oxenbury

• **THE MIGHTY**, monumental, magnificent *Music In 12 Parts* will be performed in its entirety by composer Philip Glass and his Ensemble on 7 May at the Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. The performance starts at 7PM and concludes (with an interval of 60 minutes) at 11.45PM! Book now for this sunning 210 minutes on 071 928 8800 (RFH Box Office).

• **CHARLES FOX**, a much-loved critic and colleague who died last year, is remembered in *A Jazz Tribute To Charles Fox* at Castlefield School, Dorchester on 16 May at 8.15PM. In what is a homage to a local hero (Charles lived in Weymouth), the Clive Ashley Band and the Geoff Williams-Jerry Underwood Band will each be playing a set. Further info from Peri's Scope Music on 0305 263361.

• **IF YOU'RE** in Montreal this June, prepare to become part of a "gigantic sound theatre"! The seventh edition of Electroacoustic Spring, which runs in the city from 6-21 June, brings together artists from all disciplines in a celebration of "sound ecology in an urban environment". Three hundred artists are involved and the event goes on not only indoors but in parks, on bicycle paths and streets, and on all the city's radio stations. For more info on ways to tune in, call (514) 845 2821 (batteries not include).

• **NEVER OUTDONE**, Edinburgh's Assembly Direct presents their second Kind Of Blue season at Edinburgh's Queen's Hall this month. There are concerts by Allan Holdsworth (2 May), the new Tommy Smith Sextet with Steve Williamson, Guy Barlow and Jason Rebello (8), Martin Taylor and Melanie O'Reilly (15), Bheki Mseleku and Ronnie Rae Jr (22), and Ruby Braff (29). All gigs start at 8.30PM. Box office: 031 668 2019.

• **BATH INTERNATIONAL** Festival includes a number of interesting musical programmes in its line-up this year. Bill Bruford's Earthworks and Daney Thompson's What-ever double up in The Pavilion on 23 May. Capricorn include works by Judith Weir, Neil Kaczor and James Clarke on 25 May; An Evening of British Jazz Masters on the same day includes Martin Taylor, Alan Skidmore and Julian Joseph; John Surman and John Taylor are in duo on 26 May; George Shearing plays on 29 May; Joanna McGregor plays solo on 31 May; and Orphy Robinson's Anavas and Bheki Mseleku appear on 4 June. Box office: 0225 463362.

NOW'S THE TIME

• **TWO FURTHER** imposing events on the South Bank also happen this month. Paco Pena presents his flamenco mass, *Alia Flamenca*, at the RFH on 13 May, bringing together Pena's group of flamenco musicians as well as a choir. On 20 May, there's a double-bill of Keith Tippett (playing solo) and the Bhiki Mseleku group at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Tickets info on 071 928 8800.

• **THE ICSM** World Music Days in Warsaw takes place between 15-23 May. As usual, the programme features a vast number of musical events over its nine days, covering contemporary composition from all over the planet, performance competitions, installations and more. A smattering of names involved includes composers Alicia Tetzan, Federico Ibarra, Herman Rechberger, Jep Nuux, Gino Michelazzi, Pawel Szymanski, Theo Lovendie, Rolf Wallin, Iris Szeghy, Andrew Toovey, Toetsuya Omura and many more! Tel: 48.22.276981 or fax: 48.22.277804.

• **BRITAIN HAS** been designated "guest country" for this year's Europ' Jazz Contest - even though the event actually takes place in Belgium. John Surman's Quartet, however, plays on the concluding day of the event, 27 September. It's another contest for young jazz groups (entrants under 30 years of age) and there will be eight finalists and four reserves. Send a tape of your band but first get an entry form from: Europ' Jazz Contest, Albert Michaels, Jezus-Eikse Steenweg 47, B 1560, Hoeilaar, Belgium.

BE BUTCHERED

ACTA RECORDS present saxophonist John Butcher in a solo concert to launch his solo CD, *Thirteen Friendly Numbers*, which is released on ACTA this month. John (whose playing was described as "revelatory" in an earlier *Wire*) can be heard at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square WCI at 8PM on 8 May. There will also be a rare chance to hear the duo of Phil Minton and Vervan Weston in their programme *Wayz* on the same bill. All enquiries to: 071 328 8348.



John Butcher

Andrew Patheary

• **DIAMANDA GALAS**, one of the stars of *The Wire* 97, will play a single London concert on 15 May at Royal Festival Hall, 8PM. The gig goes out under the heading "Judgement Day" and will feature Diamanda alone at the piano, as well as in a performance from her solo work *No More Tickets To The Funeral*, part of the celebrated *Plague Mass*. Box office: 071 928 8800.

• **THE WGMAD** Holidays Weekend will be held at Morecambe Bay, Lancs on 29-31 May. Shaking down the planet will be Burning Spear, Rebel MC, Aster Aweke, Zakir Hussain, The Ukrainians, Super Rail Band of Bamako, Farafina and hordes of others. Tickets start from £10 for one day up to £35 for a full weekend ticket. Info hotline is 0524 582837.

• **TWO IMPROV** stalwarts - Mary Oliver of Feet-packets and SWIG, and Daniel Weaver of Stockhausen & Walkman - provide musical accompaniment to *Death Defying The Eye*, a dance piece featuring the Claire Russ Ensemble, at the Almeida Theatre, London N1 on 1 May. Tickets from the box office on 071 359 4404.

• **CAN YOUR** feet stand it? (*What about my ears?* - Ed) The Brighton Jazz Bop '92, featuring Galliano, Pucho and The Latin Soul Brothers, Ronny "Hit" Jordan and Gilles Peterson, blows into The Event, West Street, Brighton on 29 May. Tickets from The Event Box Office on 0273 732627.

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Nearest tubes: Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square



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ICALIVEARTS

NOW'S presents . . . THE NEWS SECTION

THE TIME

• **THE CELEBRATION** of French Arts, *Franz En Direct*, continues in various London venues throughout May, ending on 6 June. Some of the music events warrant a mention here: Arab Rai master Cheb Khaled plays at The Grand on 8-9 May; FFF (Federation of French Funk) bring their unpredictable hybrid to the Powerhaus on 12 May; and six French roots bands appear at Town & Country Club 2 - La Grande Bande Des Coremuses, Le Trio Erik Marchand and Donnusana on 3 May, and Scarp, Ti Jazz and Quintet Clarinettes on 4 May.

• **ROOTS MUSIC** from Madagascar arrives in the shape of Tarika Samy this month. Malagasy music from this young band can be heard at: Aberdeen Lemon Tree (1 May), Edinburgh Assembly Rooms (2), Chesterfield May Day Festival (4), Llangadog Community Centre (8), Newtown Powys Mid-Wales Folk Festival (9), Brixton Mambo Inn (15), Dunsley Arts Centre (16), Basingstoke Central Studio (23), Spilsby Theatre (26), Newcastle Riverside Arts Centre (27), Stockton Dovecot Arts Centre (28), WOMAD Festival, Morecambe (29-30).

• **HERE'S A** new venue opening in London: Upstairs At The Claddagh Ring is at 10 Church Road, NW4 and has live jazz every Thursday from 8-11PM. One date we have is saxophonist Noel Kenton and band on 30 April.

• **JOSHUA BREAKSTONE**, a cool guitar cat from Cincinnati whose albums on Contemporary have attracted some favourable notices, is set to play some dates in the South-East this month. He'll be dusting off his plectrum at Pizza Express Dean Street (7 May), Pizza Express Maidstone (8-9), Bull Head Barnes (10) and Tenor Clef, Hoxton Square (13).

• **THIS YEAR'S** Thelonius Monk International Jazz Instrumental Competition at New York's Lincoln Centre will feature the drums, with young drummers travelling from around the world to compete for the scholarship prizes (\$10,000 first prize). Last year's winner in the tenor sax contest, Joshua Redman, will be signing a major-label deal soon. This year's judges include Chairman Max Roach, Alan Dawson, Roy Haynes and Jeff Watts. The competition takes place from 24-25 October.

• **DYNAMIC, EXCITING**, original - just some of the adjectives heard in description of Scottish band Mike Travis's EH15. They've lined up a North of England tour this month as follows: Stockton Dovecot Arts Centre (30 April), Chester Alexander Jazz Theatre Bar (1 May), Grantham Guildhall Centre (2), Spaulding South Holland Centre (3 - includes lunchtime workshop), Gainsborough Trinity Arts Centre (4), P J Bell's Jazz Cafe, Manchester (5). The band hope to play at Scottish jazz festivals later in the year.

• **THE INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FEDERATION** has announced the 11th European Jazz Competition in Leverkusen from 22-23 October. Entries are invited from all young jazz groups resident in Europe and an international jury will narrow the field down to six, all of which will be invited to perform at the Leverkusen Festival. The winners receive a cool 10,000 DM as first prize. You need to send a cassette of your band to enter and fill in the application form - available from the IJF, Arvid Meyer, Borupvej 66, DK-4683 Ronne, Denmark.

• **WINDSOR ARTS** Centre hosts a Guitar Festival from 1-4 May. Among the strummers on hand will be Bert Jansch, Ian Davies, Gerald Garcia and others, and there are workshops, lectures and more on everything from flamenco to Django Reinhardt. Details from 0753 859336.

• **ALL SORTS** of musical excitement goes on at Glasgow's Mayfest this month. Jazz representation comes from Julian Joseph (Moir Hall, 12 May), Jason Rebello (Moir Hall, 19-20) and Bill Bruford's Earthworks (Tramway, 17), and there is much more in the shape of The Balanescu Quartet (Stevenson Hall RSAMD, 17), The Greene String Quartet (Stevenson Hall, 3), FFF (The Tunnel, 13) and The Nixtaylor Band (Centre For Contemporary Arts, 15). More details can be had from the Mayfest Office on 041 552 6611.

in town TONIGHT

Our choice of May's jazz gigs
BATH Pavilion: Bill Bruford (23). **The Bell** (0225 460426): Jazz B'stards (27).

BIRMINGHAM The Bear (021 420 2563): Bheki Mseleku (4).

BRACKNELL South Hill Park (0344 484 123): Clarion Fracture Zone (24).

BRISTOL Cathedral (0272 230 359): David Murray Quartet & Nana Vasconcelos (April 28). **The Albert** (0272 661 968): Ed Jones Qt (10); Clarion Fracture Zone (31).

BURY Metropolitan (061 761 2216): Peter King Qt (30). **The Junction** (01628 62550): Jim Mullen Band (1); Bheki Mseleku Band (8); Alec Dankworth's 'Acoustic Tamba' (15); Bill Bruford's Earthworks (22); Pierre Bensussan (29).

COLCHESTER Arts Centre (0206 577 301): Eduardo Niebla/Antonio Forcione (7); Sax Appeal (21).

COVENTRY Arts Centre (0203 524 524): Ed Jones Qt (11). **Biggin Hill Horel:** Tina May Band (28).

EXETER Arts Centre (0392 421 111): Bheki Mseleku (2); Stock, Hausen & Walkman (15); Martin Taylor (23).

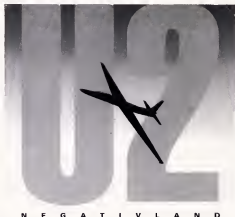
FROME Merlin Theatre (0373 65949): Charlie Henshaw Qt (9).

GLASGOW Tramway: Bill Bruford (17).

HIGH WYCOMBE Spring Garden Arts Centre (0494 464 800): Bheki Mseleku (3).

NOW'S presents . . . **NEGATIVLAND:** **THE TIME** *embattled pranksters*

by Phil England



ON AUGUST 20 last year San Francisco sound-collage artists Negativland released a single called "U2". On September 5 Island Records instigated legal proceedings and obtained an injunction preventing further sales and promotion of the record. Island then went on to force an out-of-court settlement requiring the recall and destruction of all 13,000 copies of the record along with the master tapes and all associated parts, leaving the band and their label California SST with a bill of some \$45,000.

The single is packaged so that without close inspection it could have been mistaken for a new single by U2 entitled "Negativland". It contains two Negativland-style cover versions of U2's "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For", the first containing a twisted interpretation of the lyric, a choral hum of the melody line, and a 30-second sample of the original interwoven with a complex tapestry of sound-bites from all manner of relevant and irrelevant sources. The second is an instrumental electro-pop reworking topped with telling out-takes of comments by *American Top 40* presenter Casey Kasem. It's a dense work which requires careful listening in order to catch all the subtleties in the many-layered sound snippets. Scramble jam fuzz: not that you get to hear it.

Negativland put out their first record in 1980 and during their 12-year span, plundering, sardonically re-presenting and criticising the American Media Landscape has been a major element of their work. Increasingly the band have taken on the role of cultural guerrillas, conducting experiments with media-feedback. Their previous project, "Helter Skelter", chronicled how a rumour of a possible link between the band and a boy murdering his entire family with an axe was turned into unexamined "fact" by newspapers (they'd started the rumour).

With "U2" they were following in the footsteps of Canadian composer John Oswald who hit the same music industry nerve with his *Plunderphonics* CD in 1989. Besides working almost exclusively

LIVERPOOL Bluecoat Arts Centre (051 709 5297); Bhiki Mseleku (1); Mountford Hall (051 707 1092); Thomas Lang (14).

MANCHESTER Band On The Wall (061 832 6625); Allan Holdsworth Qtr (4); Ed Jones Qtr (7); Apitos (8); Peter King Qtr (28); University (021 275 2930); Thomas Lang (8).

NOTTINGHAM Angel Row Gallery (053 554854); Evan Parker (6).

PLYMOUTH Ordluff Arms (0752 794 165); Martin Dale Qtr (29).

POOLE Arts Centre (0202 685222); Nigel Hitchcock Band (14).

READING Rising Sun Institute (0734 866 788); Max Eastley/David Toop (13).

SOUTHAMPTON University (0703 593 741); Mornington Locket Qtr (5); John Law & Mark Sanders (6); Terry Mortimer Sextet (12); Terry Seabrook Qtr (13).

SOUTHPORT Arts Centre: The Brasshoppers (2).

SWINDON Link Centre (0793 611 181); West Eleven (8).

WINDSOR Arts Centre (0753 859 336); Barbara Thompson Qtr (9).

YORK Arts Centre (0904 627 129); Ed Jones Qtr (9).

in & around LONDON

BLOCKHEATH CONCERT HALL SE3 (081 463 0100); Elton Dean/Howard Riley Quartet (12).

BULL'S HEAD, Barnes: (do 081 995 7613); Antonio Forcione & Eduardo Niebla (4).

JACKSONS LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE (081 341 4421); David Jean-Baptiste Qtr (16).

JAZZ CAFE NW1 (071 284 4358); Lateral Thinking (1-2); Pinski Zoo (7); Cheryl Alleyne (9); Fred Wesley (12-13); Ray Gelato (15); Bill Bruford (19); Joe Henderson/Charlie Haden/Rene Rosnes (27-28); Ed Jones Qtr (30).

JAZZ RUMOURS, N16 (081 254 6198); Stefano Maltese/Roberto Bellareta/Marcio Marcos/Steve Noble (1); Dave Alexander/Paul Dunnall (8); Elton Dean/Howard Riley Qtr (22); John Stevens' SME w/ Evan Parker (22); Double Forest (29).

MONKEYS JAZZ CLUB, Brentwood (0621 891 2877); Tommy Chase (3); Bhiki Mseleku (31).

THE SOUTH BANK COMPLEX (071 938 8800); Philip Glass Ensemble (7); Bhiki Mseleku & Keith Tippett (20); Foyer: Ed Jones Qtr (15).

TOWN & COUNTRY (071 284 0303); Ronny Jordan (15).

VORTEX (071 254 6516); Ed Jones Qtr (22).

WORLDS END (071 000 0000) Eyes On Brazil (9).

YAA ASANTEWAA ARTS CENTRE, W9 (071 286 1656); Cameron Pierre (7); Carol Grimes (21); Cameron Pierre + 706 (28).

News items and listings should reach us by 2nd May for inclusion in the June issue.

NOW'S *presents . . . GAVIN FRIDAY: Songwriter and singer* THE TIME

by Biba Kopf

ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN . . . BRECHT? BEHAN? BONO? JESUS CHRIST? Some Irish singers believe they walk on water. Gavin Friday *knows* he skates on thin ice.

"I arrived in America to record *Adam's Eve*, *Brecht In America* under my arm and a copy of *The Face* on my knee. I'd just gone skinhead, and rolled up at immigration in a grey suit. First thing happens, they open the book at trials and communism. Then they see my face, hair shorn, in *The Face*, under the heading Dublin Radical, and there's me screaming 'FUCK OFF ALL HIPPIES' at the city's raggle taggle crews. Aha, he's a communist. I was fingerprinted, the whole works."

ON MATTERS of tact and international diplomacy, Gavin Friday might still be something of a virgin prune. Yet in person he's charming, expansive and often irrepressibly funny. Seated in one of Dublin's newer Italian restaurants, he only pauses to adjust the faulty lightbulb dangling directly above his head, laughing off any comic implications as it goes out. And when the boy sings, Liberty and the whole of America would open their arms to him.



He's no angel, that's for sure. At its soundest, his voice has the shaly timbres of a cracked church bell. Yet he turns its variability to great theatrical effect to create and carry the many switches in character, mood and setting that his repertoire requires. One moment, it's all swagger, sweat and sexual threat, the next it's all bruised blues tenderness. It's capable of cradling the most disarming declarations, of conveying the sweetest whispers, just moments after indulging the drunken bours of his inventions spewing forth the funniest and foulest Dublinese. By any means necessary, this boy gets through.

The things he and his musical collaborator Maurice Seazer do with and to the song places him alongside that select few — Nick Cave, Band Of Holy Joy's Johnny Brown, Brel-mode Marc Almond, *Hole-era* Foetus, new singer Melinda Miel, The Queen Of Siam and, occasionally, Devoto and Momus — prepared to defy the current critical anti-song consensus, to weight a song with as many (or, of course, as few) words it takes to tell a story, communicate a moment, somehow undo the listener.

And what a great thing the weight of words can sometimes do to a song! They demand the most precarious balances of rhythm and melody to keep the vessel afloat, paradoxically spacing the beat at ever wider removes to bear up unwieldy sentences rendered graceful by the singer's art. Being writers and performers, they know exactly how far they can push the vessel out of shape before it falls apart.

Sometimes you're drawn to their like because they're prepared to risk all in a performance. Strangely (or not — perhaps they read each other's interviews) Gavin Friday and Nick Cave share a love for fat Elvis in Vegas, forgetting the words to "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" and, at the point of the song's collapse, masterfully rescuing the night with the one thing he's got left after his sex and beaury have long since dissipated: his voice.

But, in truth, most of those named above draw on a wholly other, and more European, song tradition; perhaps most openly so in Friday's case. In the 70s, American confessional singer-songwriters largely became mired in a desire for authenticity of experience. In contrast, by theatricalising and distancing experience, European writer-performers like Jacques Brel, George Brassens and Barbara bring listeners closer to it through the fine drawn characters the singer inhabits and make real for the song's duration.

YOU CAN imagine the release Friday felt when he discovered this very different European tradition, one that fits him far better than the Celtic Soul that is the burden of Irish music in the wake of Van Morrison. This process began while he was a member of Dublin's Virgin Prunes, more personal purgative than performance art group, but more influential in

david sanborn



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Weekend Telegraph

"Inspiration for a whole generation of
into saxophonists" — *Jazz FM Magazine*



NOW'S presents . . . GAVIN FRIDAY

THE TIME

retrospect that was apparent at the time.

"At only our second gig in 1978 there was this 58-year-old woman among all these punks. There she was, in a shawl, makeup, smoking a cigar. It was Agnes Bernelle! It was, darling, you were wonderful. Here we were, 18 years old, and she was going, 'I'll have to educate you.'"

Bowie was of course the other direct route to Brel and Brecht.

"The same time I discovered Ziggy Stardust I saw Liza Minelli and Joel Grey in Cabaret. You know, I was so young, I don't know what this is about, but I understand it. It connects with some feeling, some need. Then later you read Isherwood, see Grosz, get into the whole German expressionist thing."

At first sight, Friday's roots might strike you as impossibly hackneyed — but think again. Does it have to begin with Chuck Berry? James Brown? Velvet Underground? The Rolling Stones? Look what's being done with their songs.

"I can't believe in the mystery of pop being killed," he says, "or the thrill going out of hearing something like Roxy Music's second LP for the first time. Now it's like the fucken Rolling Stones have destroyed the world," he slyly jibes, "it's photocopies all the way through. I hear they've got colour photocopies now, so it's all quite glossy."

ITS SURFACE periodically raked over, the bloody ground of Weimar, German expressionism, Brecht/Weill etc is still immensely fertile, provided those roots are sunk deep. This is the sap fusing Friday's new vision for the pop song. When he finally gathered himself following the Virgin Prunes' split in 1985, he founded The Blue Jaysus, his Dublinese take on *The Blue Angel*. In composer/keyboards player Maurice Seazer, then a theology student at Trinity College, he met his inspired collaborator. "Can you imagine it? Here was someone totally unfucked up by rock and roll, who didn't want to be Bowie or the Clash. He was so far away from that world, it was really exciting."

The fruit of their collaboration was 1988's excellent debut *Each Man Kills The Thing He Loves*, produced by Hal Wilner. Its coordinates were three inspired song covers. The first, the title track, is a setting of an Oscar Wilde poem sung elsewhere by Jeanne Moreau in *Querelle*, Fassbinder's poetic film hallucination of the Genet novel. Second is a haunted take of Dylan's loveliest spiritual "Death Is Not The End". Finally, there's an interpretation of Brel's "Next" which owes more to the masculine swagger and vulnerability of Alex Harvey than the shivering resentments of Marc Almond's no less valid reading.

If these covers locate the record geographically and spiritually somewhere between a Dublin snug and a Marseilles brothel, the Friday/Seazer originals are very easily their equals.

They show just how well Friday latched onto his idols, parasitically feeding off them and very quickly discarding his host bodies to allow his own talent to breathe. What emerges from the husks is the captivating Glam Savage behind the new album *Adam's Eve*.

Glam savagery is the bizarrely logical outcome of a lineage taking in Brecht, Brel, Behan, Bowie and Bolan, not to mention the five years he spent in dress with the Virgin Prunes. It is the ideal guise for merging his various obsessions in a style that wipes the evergreen mould from the song forms he's drawing on, invigorating them so as they can strut head and shoulders above the most colourful sluts pop might throw up. And if the Dublinese he's presently writing isn't as naturally musical as he makes it sound, then it's a mark of his skill as both lyricist and performer to make it so.

"The Irish couldn't cope with the fact they were being forced to speak English," he says. "Basically Dublinese takes the poetic essence of the Irish language into English, making fucken poetry out of even the most vulgar expressions. Even at its most sexist, it's still fucken poetry. Like, Jaysus, the way she was bleedin' walkin', you'd think her arse was eating chocolate. And you know Dublinese for clitoris is wee man in a boat."

In pop, where the singer is rarely separated from the song, this can cause problems. Noting the desperate, sometimes despicable nature of some of the characters populating his songs, Friday is prepared for a few censorious fights. "King Of Trash" and "Fun And Experience" hold a mirror to cocky Dublin boy wonders and Mancunian wideboys alike, part mocking them, part revealing a glimpse of humanity as the booze works holes into the self-image they've been at such great pains to create.

"In 1977 as a passionate fucked-up Irish kid I believed there was no future," he swears. "Now I have a 21-year-old brother on the dole half the time and for him there really is no future. But he has his Armani after shave to protect him from the world. This is what the Happy Mondays are about, the commodity element of clothes and sex as fun, even if they look like fucken wombles. Where's the experience in it?"

THE HEALING power of the song, specially the new glam kind Friday sings on *Adam's Eve* only starts when its subjects are stripped bare, successive layers of self-protection ripped away with mounting savagery until finally their essence reveals itself to them, naked, quivering and vulnerable.

"The most beautiful thing about a song," Friday enthuses, "is, you go, I've been there, I've done that, thank you, I'm not alone."

Only the man at home in a crowd will take a song in the heart as a threat. ■



NOW'S THE TIME

Becky Sinker

new york **NOW**

The regular report from our man in the Five Boroughs, Howard Mandel.

FOR SHEER it's-about-time glamour there was no topping the Rhythm and Blues Foundation's Pioneer Awards at the Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Centre the night after the Grammys went to the square U.S. music biz's safest bets. Probably 1000 singers, songwriters, players and hangers-on enjoyed the sparkle of Manhattan at night, visible in all directions from a 64th floor, as well as an open bar, extravagant buffet, live-from-a-dark-corner TV interviews, studiously casual jamming, and hobnobbing/schmoozing/networking/flirting, call it what you will. The awards were not just plaques but also cash money, and only Lifetime Achievement winner Aretha Franklin forsook an appearance (she avoids elevators).

The assembled multitude — among many others, New Orleans composer Allen Toussaint (in town to oversee production of his new Broadway show), Queen Latifah, Bobby "Blue" Bland, Sam (à la Dave) Moore, Hank ("The Twist") Ballard, pianist Charles Brown, The Dells, Narada Michael Walden, the family Staples, Bonnie Raitt, Ahmet (Atlantic Records) Ertegun, Ray Benson of Asleep At The Wheel, Muhai Richard

Abrams at a table with Little Jimmy Scott, Al Hibbler, Nellie ("Fine Brown Frame") Lutchter, Rufus Thomas, Chuck Jackson — partied like one big prosperous family. A band of New York sessionmen led by guitarist Danny Drahner got together on funky Memphis-style backing charts. Yeah — more parties!

Because when we're happy we can hear so much better what's happening in, say, the uncompromisingly complex but utterly alive music of Anthony Braxton's band — Marilyn Crispell, Mark Dresser and Gerry Hemingway — ensconced at the New Music Cafe for a long weekend. Steve Coleman's M-Base had three days there, trombonist Papo Vasquez led Milton Cardonna, teedist Mario Rivera, bassist Andy Gonzalez *et al* in Latin jazz every Wednesday in March, double reedist Joseph Celli debuted No World Improvisations with Korean komungo player Jin Hi Kim, didgeridoodler Adam Plack and Senegalese drummer Mor Thiam, Cecil Taylor celebrated his 63rd birthday there with wild crying tenorist Charles Gayle in his quarter. Mondays had belonged to independent-minded and -handed pianist Borah Bergman, though lately there's been middling rock every Sunday through Tuesday. Still, the bar crowd has quieted down. Could this place last?

An update on the American Jazz Orchestra: after six seasons, the 20-piece ensemble came into its own in a programme of infrequently heard charts by Eddie Sauter (for Red Norvo from the mid '30s and incipient Third Streamer

NOW'S presents
THE TIME

... *THE EX: Dutch anarcho-fun*



by Ben Thompson

IT'S TAKEN their recent rash of live and recorded collaborations with such musicianly luminaries as Skeleton Crew cellist Tom Cora, drum-for-lure Han Bennink and celebrated Vic Reeves sideman Steve Beresford (they term them, generically, "The Jazzers") to bring Amsterdam's The Ex into *The Wire*'s orbit. Of course, they should always have been there, if only because they so radically question assumptions of the fun a Dutch anarchist noise band can make.

Consistently undervalued in the UK by virtue of their deep political commitment and low country origins, The Ex have for 12 years now maintained a unique momentum, most powerfully felt in live performance, where the intensity of their playing sweeps a listener up and along with the same force that drives the band. They formed in response to punk, or more accurately post-punk; the Gang of Four's scratchy agit-prop, the DIY folk-didacticism of the Mekons and Wire's musical rigour being their most obvious influences. But their sound is distinctly their own, as is the moral scrupulousness which sustains it. Many bands profess a distaste for ego-frippery, but few go so far as to insist that all names on gig posters should be printed the same size.

Summoned to the telephone from the garden, where he is – appropriately enough – clearing away the dead wood, guitar man Tomic explains how the political concerns which permeate every aspect of what The Ex do 'grow from the whole Amsterdam squat scene we came from originally, which is not nearly so strong now as it was a few years ago. People were always busy putting out information and we were doing music, so it seemed natural to put the two together.'

There is always humour in The Ex's polemics. Their most widely-seen poster features a grimacing executive showing his empty pockets, accompanied by the legend "Home taping is killing record companies . . . and it's about time". Even their sternest and most forbidding package will come with the invocation "Have a nice listen". The badly photo-copied slogan sheets of punk-politico stereotypes have no place in their communication armoury. Their production values – most lavishly embodied in the punchy archive photo-history of the CNT union's role in the Spanish Civil War which accompanied their 1996 double-single – have always been high, and they appreciate just how nice it is for the consumer to get something for nothing. Their current set of six singles (one released every two months for the past year) comes in a dinky carrier bag, which is decorated with an unflattering picture of the Mayor of Amsterdam and proclaims "this is an Amsterdam scam-bag".

Political campaigns have often been a stimulus to musical co-operation; hence for example The Ex's tie-up with the Kurdish musician Belder, featured on the second of the six singles. (Others feature two Belgian stand-up comedians with an ironic hymn to the joys of singing in English, a traditional Hungarian folk song, and a live recording from The Ex's Bimhuis concert with assorted top improvisers.) There is not a hint of trad-rock condescension in this collaboration; just delight in expanding possibilities – "He saw us playing and was amazed by it, and we saw him playing and felt the same way" – and awareness of how well The Ex's wiry music adapts to different disciplines, and also stretches the people they play with.

The same is true of their work with improvising musicians. The



Ex's way of working is already compatible. "We make music from playing along together and songs emerge; there is not just one person who writes". In addition, "You get a really good tension when they try to improvise music they have never played before." The basis of this music is anyway not so unfamiliar to him: "I grew up with it - my father is a jazz freak, so of course I rebelled against it". The Ex worked with jazz players as early as 1982, and their excellent 1989 double LP *Joggers and Smugglers*, just issued on CD, features saxophonist Ab Baars and singer Dorpsoudste de Jong amongst a long list of collaborators (it also includes Sonic Youth's ubiquitous Thurston Moore).

To really enjoy the Bimhuis recordings, as is often the case with improvisation, you probably had to be there. *Scrabbling At The Lock*, The Ex's album with Tom Cora, is a different matter altogether; it contains some of both parties' most accessible work. "He knows all the theoretical background to music and we know nothing," Terrie admits cheerfully. "In the beginning he was quite shocked that I didn't even know which notes I was using - he would have to say 'second string, third fret' - but in the end we made a good basis for him, because when we play together there are four of us but we are like one person".

The Ex's set of six singles, complete with stickers, info and carrier paper bag, is available for £12 (International Money Order payable in guilders) from RALBOR, PO Box 14767, 1001 LG Amsterdam, Holland. *Joggers and Smugglers* is now out on CD (Fut Poppet/Ex Records 005 CD 040041D), as is *Scrabbling At The Lock*.

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A QUARTER - TONE *in a ten-cent sound*

Max Harrison attends *In Tune?* – a festival dedicated to the non-standard pitch interval.



In Tune? organiser James Wood wonders how to break it to members of the Guildhall New Music ensemble that a quarter-tone metallophone is beginner's stuff to a true microtonalist.

OVER 30 years ago Stravinsky was asked if there was any musical element still capable of radical exploitation and development, and he replied, "Yes, pitch. I even risk a prediction that pitch will comprise the main difference between the 'music of the future' and our music, and I consider the most important aspect of electronic music is that it can manufacture pitch". Although there may, even now, be a few people sufficiently out of touch to imagine that microtonal composition – the regular and systematic use of intervals smaller than a semitone – is impractical or at best a marginal issue, Stravinsky's remarks were already much out of date when his and Robert Craft's *Memories and Commentaries* was published in 1960.

This is no place for an historical survey, which properly would take us back to Ancient Greece. Yet it should be noted that, for instance, Julian Carrillo was experimenting with his "sonido 13" system of equal-tempered quarter-tones in the

1890s, Charles Ives was at work on his "Three Quarter-tone Pieces", using two pianos tuned a quarter-tone apart, early in the century, and Alois Hába's earliest quarter-tone composition, a suite for strings, appeared in 1917. Some of the

microtonalist innovators also made instruments, for example Hába's quarter-tone clarinet (1924) and harmonium (1928). Ensembles able to pioneer the performance of this music also emerged quite promptly, perhaps the most notable being Carrillo's Orquesta Sonido 13, a complete orchestra playing exclusively in microtones, which toured Mexico in the 1930s, sometimes with Leopold Stokowski as conductor.

It presumably is obvious that quarter-tones, dividing the octave into 24 instead of 12 steps, hugely increase the melodic vocabulary available to composers (and improvisers) and the repertoire of possible harmonic inflection. Even this breakthrough into new dimensions of musical space, however, is only a start. Harry Partch's use of a 43-interval octave is relatively well known, others have employed the 53-interval one proposed by earlier theorists, while Ezra Sims developed a 72-note division which entails the use of twelfths of a tone. Perhaps that is enough to suggest the divergent paths microtonal composition has been following, for microtonality does not offer a method, still less a style, all other aspects of a given piece being determined by the composer as before. Plainly this now includes the choice of pitches to be employed, and seeing that electronic equipment, as noted by Stravinsky, can with great accuracy produce any pitch or combination of pitches required, we may be witnessing a beginning of the end of any kind of standard tuning.

For some years it had been obvious that we needed a coherent, if necessarily incomplete, survey of this field with authoritative live performances. In December the Society for the Promotion of New Music conducted a stimulating Composers' Forum on Microtonality, and this was followed at the Barbican Centre on 7-9 March by the UK's first microtonal music festival, organised by James Wood and given the pleasingly sardonic title "In Tune?". This marked the debut of the Centre for Microtonal Music, based at the Guildhall School of Music, and its two performing groups, the professional, highly specialised Ensemble of the CMM and the student Guildhall New Music Ensemble. Also involved were the New London Chamber Choir and the Arditti String Quartet.

Perhaps it would have been advisable for the festival to have begun with the Arditti team's programme instead of saving it till last. The familiarity of the string quartet medium focussed attention closely on the microtonal question, on what the presence of small intervals does to the musical language in terms both of expression and structure, whereas in most of the other events the issue was complicated by an often elaborate use of electronic apparatus. Again, the Arditti concert presented works by three major pioneers in the field and it would

have been useful to have heard these first. They were Carrillo's early "Dos Bosquejos", Haba's late Quarter No. 14 (1963) and Ivan Vishnegradsky's Quartet No. 1 composed in 1923-4. This composer began as a Scriabin disciple and the influence of that master was quite evident, notwithstanding the quarter-tones and the fact we were offered the piece in Vishnegradsky's 1953 revision. It would be interesting to hear both versions. Also included were pieces by James Wood and Brian Ferneyhough. The latter's Quarter No. 3 was fascinating, particularly the first movement's impression of frozen, lunar remoteness.

Alas, it is impossible even to mention here all the works heard at the earlier concerts, though most deserve detailed comment, as do the performances by the various ensembles, which met the often extreme demands made on them with striking equanimity. A good illustration is the singing of the New London Chamber Choir, in Giacinto Scelsi's "Yliam", a short, beautiful glimpse of the "new" world of microtonality, and especially in Iannis Xenakis's familiar "Nuits", obviously a major piece and almost fantastically imaginative. The solo singing of Sara Stowe in Alejandro Vinas's "Chant d'ailleurs" for soprano and tape and Justin Connolly's "Sapphic" represented, too, an amazing virtuosity.

Outstanding among the purely tape pieces was Jonathan Harvey's "Ritual Melodies", and to this must be coupled a mention of his "Valley of Aosta" (prompted by the explosive energy of Turner's 1836 painting of that name) for the

Ensemble of the CMM. Also of high quality were Tristan Murail's "Allégories" and Wood's "Phainomena", both for instrumental ensemble and tape. When the almost infinite richness of effect made available by electronic equipment is crossed with the widely varied microtonal content of these works the result is a heady brew indeed. Truly, there is no limit to the expressive and technical resources of music and we shall never reach the end of them!

There was a lively open forum on future directions for microtonality with several of the composers and contributions from the audience, and an absorbing, highly technical lecture by Rudolf Rasch on a possible unification of the diverse systems of microtonal tuning which have emerged. We also heard from Rob Overman of the Huygens Fokker Foundation, Amsterdam, which is attempting to put together a detailed international catalogue of all microtonal compositions, a library of all relevant writings on this music and of all recordings of it.

Great credit is due to James Wood, the animating spirit of "In Tune?". It was, inevitably, the most adventurous part of the Barbican Centre's Tenth Birthday celebrations, demonstrating the extreme variety of past and present microtonal composition, and giving some idea of the sheer quantity of work now going on in this sphere. It made a completely absorbing three days and obviously should become an annual event. As all the concerts were exceptionally well attended, this may not be an entirely hopeless prospect. ■



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IT SEEMS unlikely there's anyone reading this magazine who believes that the current interest in "world music" was created by white rock stars, whether through their benevolence or their desperation to find a new angle. We all know, don't we, that the movement was consumer-led and caused by fans disenchanted with the aforementioned icons of "popular music".

It's easily overlooked, though, how much the "world musicians" (I nearly said "real musicians") have been themselves working gradually towards a rapprochement. For instance, there's been what one writer dismissed as "International folk artists doing everything with a rock beat". On the other hand, there's also a long-standing brotherhood of performers who are genuinely interested in other cultures and their musical differences and correspondences. Take John Coltrane, or Don Cherry. Or Randy Weston.

The 66-year-old Brooklyn-born pianist-composer was already curious about non-Western music nearly 50 years ago, and has spent two periods of several years each living in Africa. One of his fondest memories is of taking part in the month-long FESTAC celebration in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977, which brought together players from 60 different "countries of African culture". "There was so much music, it was so

village HEADMAN

**Pianist
Randy Weston
went to Africa
long before the
people with the
tape-recorders.**

**He tells
Brian Priestley
about the
past and future
of roots.**



beautiful I don't think I slept for a month", he says.

Randy's father, soul-food restaurateur Frank Edward Weston, was one person who prepared the pianist for his role of cultural ambassador and interpreter. "It was simply passed down to me, from people who I listened to, about the whole mystique of African music. Because people speak about 'African toots', but that's it - it's just *spoken* about. And it's ironic today, because everybody now is going to Africa with the tape-recorders, trying to get new rhythms, new sounds. And my dad always told me: Africa is the past, and Africa is also the future. It's really African culture in the United States, and Brazil, and Haiti, and Cuba, and Trinidad that has produced all these musics that's come out of the Western hemisphere. But Mother Africa is still the source."

Not only of music. A Weston composition reprinted in his new French Verve/U.S. Antilles album (*The Spirit Of Our Ancestors*) is called "African Village Bedford-Stuyvesant".

"I wrote that in the 1970s but it means that, when I grew up in Brooklyn, we had a total African village, a total black community of food, of music, of games, of everything. So people would come from everywhere to listen to the music: Charlie Parker would be there, Miles Davis lived in Brooklyn at the time, Max Roach was there, George Russell - I could go on and on. In New York City we had our own little village; we had our own culture and our own way of approaching life."

ALREADY DURING this period, Weston's musical curiosity was stimulated by his teenage friend, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik, who later specialised in playing the North African *oud* and used it on Coltrane's Village Vanguard sessions. (Randy, incidentally, completely refutes the *Grove Dictionary* claim that Abdul-Malik is the same person as Sam Gill, bassist on Randy's own first albums.)

"Malik used to take me to downtown Brooklyn, where there's a big Arab section, 'cos his father's from the Sudan. So I was exposed to this Arab music. Him and I were trying to find 'funny notes', a way to play in between the notes. But when I heard Monk play, I said 'That's it! He's *doing* it.'"

On the sleeve of one of his early recordings, Weston told Nat Hentoff of the shock of hearing Monk in 1944 with the great Coleman Hawkins: "I figured that if Hawk had hired Monk, Monk must have something to say". Now Randy simply adds, "He changed my life!" Nor that Monk said much verbally, but he taught by playing at home for Weston and others. Another colleague was Herbie Nichols, with whom Randy recalls spending whole days at pianist Valdo Williams' house. "We were together all the time, saying 'Hey man, listen to this'. But we were always talking about Monk; he was the unquestioned master, you see, that gave us enough to go in our own particular directions. But, at the same time, you can't get away . . ."

Earlier in the conversation, Weston had gone into the antecedents of North American interest in African music. "Oh, there's a long history of that. Ellington may be the first.

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Randy Weston

Art Blakey, without question, because he was making those African percussion albums. And then certainly Dizzy Gillespie, when I heard the Cuban drums with the bebop orchestra." As to the piano, Randy owns up, like many others, that "I discovered Duke last. Him and Basie, they're sleepers, you know, and people don't think of them as pianists. I'm very strong for 'sound' and, when I heard Ellington get those sounds and colours out of the piano, phew!"

The ideal of individual performers having their own identifiable sound, whether Ellington or Monk or Nichols, may be the African-American contribution to the world of music. It's certainly present when Weston gets to grips with an unaccompanied acoustic piano, as on his recent visit to the Tenor Clef. There are echoes of the above giants, but his unmetaphorical stature (six-foot-seven) enables him to obtain a bell-like tone which, with voicings that no one else uses, is instantly recognisable. But at the same time he has a very traditional attitude to material, incorporating a few Ellington and Monk standards and adding only gradually to a repertoire of compositions he has created over the last 35 years.

His subsequent European tour, taking in the Jazz Cafe, was different. For a start, he led an eight-piece group featuring American horn-players and three African musicians, Ghanaian percussionist Eric Asante (previously heard on Weston's three albums titled *Portraits*) and two Moroccan-based performers on the three-string *gimbri*, which Randy likens to the U.S. string-bass tradition. The players concerned are members of the Ganawas, "black Moroccans who were taken from West Africa, who told me they originally came from Ancient Egypt. In Morocco you have Oriental music, you have Berber music, you have Andalusian music, but this is the really pure African music and it's much like our early blues. They're used to heal people, they go through certain spiritual ceremonies. Even today, their musicians are historians, they play games in music; they have such great knowledge that we just don't realise. In my years in Africa, I found out what it is to be a musician."

Weston seems at last to be gaining some recognition in the U.S., with a Lincoln Centre concert last year and the reissue of his big-band classic *Uhuru Afrika*. Like that 1960 extravaganza, the new album was arranged by Melba Liston who, despite a severe stroke in 1985, is now writing scores with the aid of a computer. As well as guest appearances by Dizzy Gillespie and Pharoah Sanders, it includes Dewey Redman, Billy Harper, Idris Muhammad and one *gimbri*.

But his future appears to be wedded to Morocco, the country which invited him back after a State Department tour in 1967 and where he had lived again for most of the last seven years.

"I'm comfortable in an Islamic country, I'm comfortable in a Christian country. As we say, music is the language of God, and musicians have this wonderful gift to be able to spread the spiritual message through our music. Which cuts through all barriers and religions and ages and sexes and races."

NEGATIVLAND continued from page 7

with sampled material from artists including Elvis Presley, Metallica, James Brown and Cecil Taylor, the cover of *Plunderphonics* featured Michael Jackson's head grafted onto the body of semi-naked white woman. Despite rigorous crediting of the source material and the fact that the CD was never intended for sale but distributed free to DJs, journalists and music biz friends, the Canadian Recording Industry Association threatened legal action and then ordered that the undistributed copies and master tapes be crushed. By contrast, the legitimacy and artistic merit of Oswald's work was subsequently given Industry recognition when Elektra commissioned Oswald to produce a radio-only CD EP to celebrate their 30th anniversary, working with material by such artists as The Doors, Carly Simon and Faster Pussycat.

The American approach in a lawsuit is to dig up all relevant legislation: in this case Island Records and U2's publishers Warner-Chappell Music presented *Negativland* with 180 pages of preliminary legal documents. Island's case hinged on the copyright law relating to both the cover and the music. Concerning graphics, the law is fairly clear: *Negativland* had appropriated U2 imagery, so that the record has plainly been *made to look* like a U2 single. *Negativland* offered to change the cover, but Island Records were allegedly unwilling to negotiate. The question of music copyright in the age of sampling is a much more muddy affair, and there are legal precedents which point in different directions. In particular, in *Negativland's* favour, a 1972 amendment to American copyright called the Fair Use Doctrine allows the appropriation of copyrighted material for purposes including social comment and education.

Sampling is of course one of the most important of cultural innovations in recent years; as well as the huge body of work in HipHop and Rap, turntable manipulators like Christian Marclay, Phil Jeck and Martin Tetreault, composers like John Oswald, Bob Oserberg, Richard Tryballe, David Mahler, critical plagiarists The JAMMS, The Tape Beatles, and Culturcide, and improvising sampler-performers like Nicholas Collins and Adam Brecht all flourish. Sampling has become a key part of the musical vocabulary. As *Negativland* put it: "The question that must arise to the surface of legal consciousness now is: at what point in the process of found sound incorporation does the new creation possess its own unique identity which supersedes the sum of its parts thus gaining artistic license?"

The initial reaction to both projects highlights the obsessive need for control at work within the music industry. Both Oswald and *Negativland/SST* lacked the financial resources to argue their case – the circulation of "U2" and *Plunderphonics* is thus ended, leaving the legal, artistic and moral issues largely unresolved, except by fiat: the corporate attitude for the moment apparently being "Might Is Right". U2 themselves, by their silence, along with large swathes of the music press (perhaps in their fear of losing the goodwill of a group whose appearance on magazine covers always sells issues), have for the moment seemingly endorsed this questionable principle.

In the meantime *Negativland* have quit SST as a bitter row ensues over who's footing the bill. Since both parties were responsible in part for the release, *Negativland* have suggested a 50/50 split. SST want the band to foot a total bill of \$90,000 and are now threatening legal action to get it. A single "Guns" has been rush-released in an attempt to recoup some of the money. The cover, amusingly, is modelled on the previous "U2" single, features a U2 spy plane and is dedicated to "the members of our favourite Irish rock band, their record label, and their attorneys. This music is two U."

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EXTREME

Robert Yates
meets

the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy,
the industrial rap duo
who want to tear up the stereotypes.
Photo by Mel Yates.

DISPOSURE



THE NAME might have been snappier. The Californian duo, Michael Franti and Roni Tse, could have taken a syllable: Hip, or better still, Dis, and slipped easily into the genre. But *The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy* like to approach generic holes as square pegs, and the name is a pretty economic, if not euphonic, way to touch on the production process and how, in its cause, musicians are wont to speak with forked tongues.

In HipHop, the tensions between self-expression and saleability have been resolved in the conventional industry way of making a fashion of small novelties and subversions. Cussing, holding your crotch, or toting an Uzi are all skills young HipHoppers on the make ought to master. Says Franti: "In the music industry, there's always pressure to perpetuate

what's working, and what's working right now is gangster style."

Hiphoprisy have a song called "Famous And Dandy (Like Amos And Andy)" (included on their debut album, just released: *HipHoprisy Is The Greatest Luxury*), which refers to two black characters featured in a pre-Second World War US radio programme. "They were caricatures," says Franti, "lazy and shiftless, and always involved in get-rich-quick schemes." On the radio, they were played by white actors; when the show transferred to television, black actors took over. "In the song," says Franti, "we ask how far we will go in playing stereotypes to achieve some modicum of success."

So the name's smart as both guard and seduction. Like a theatrical alienation effect that foregrounds artifice, it induces trust. But it is also apt, says Franti, as a warning of what the band could become. It's a tag that prods.

FRANTI AND Tse, both in their mid-20s, live in Oakland. The racial mix of Oakland and the wider Bay Area (where they grew up and where cultures, unlike in zoned Los Angeles, readily take from each other) has shaped, they say, their approach to music, making it eclectic and assimilative, always open to suggestion.

They are a world of variety in themselves. Franti is, in his

words, African Native American Irish and German; Tse, the son of emigrants from Hong Kong. Franti is tall, a six-sixer, the height a boon when he performed as a college basketball player, a role which, when he did not make the grade, taught him how to be a disposable hero. Tse is small, his eyes on a level with his partner's midriff. Franti is the talker, the theoriser; in conversation he will return to a point until he's refined his expression. Tse listens, supporting Franti's themes with good-humoured anecdotes.

They have a musical history: as half of the Beatnigs, who recorded on Jello Biafra's Alternative Tentacles label. In terms of sound, they retain little from the experience other than an occasional fondness for industrial percussion. More notably, the band's internal politics persuaded them that self-examination ought to precede and accompany social criticism. With the Beatnigs in mind, Franti now asks, "How can you criticise governments and the like when you're not treating your fellow band members well? I hope we now always relate questions to ourselves. Where do our hypocrisies lie?"

CRAFTED FROM their own playing and reworked samples, *Hypocrisy* grooves to a wide range of rhythms and tones. The contemplative "Music And Politics", with Franti's voice coming on as the wise confessor, is accompanied by a little jazz extemporising on acoustic guitar. "Financial Leprosy", the neighbouring track, sounds as if it includes many of Tse's unconventional rhythmic sources, chains and angle grinders perhaps, and Franti uses his voice to pound. Franti is happy to call it HipHop if we'll settle for no more precise a definition of this than "just talk over a beat".

It is a deal removed from the bectoring monotone of NWA and the like, or the engaging whimsy produced by De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest, and PM Dawn. Franti recalls how a couple of years ago the now revered wisdom of HipHop as the new jazz was taken as a cue for HipHoppers to use jazz samples. This he found too literal, but the parallel is, he insists, instructive: "Like jazz, HipHop can be an evolutionary form, always moving."

The spin HipHop puts on the form means not only songs of different styles co-existing on the same album, but, within songs, something akin to the futuristic project of Jon Hassell (whose Fourth World described musics of cities that did not yet exist). Tse compares how the band composes to his own second craft: "I'm still a furniture maker, and I often think that what we do is similar to how I put different types or shades of wood together, looking for new combinations, seeing what might be complementary."

Franti knows his way around art chatter, nods at Hassell, and is quite happy that a HipHop sampler's methods deal, as a matter of course, in bricolage and mutation, in new interactions and juxtapositions. But inasmuch as claiming allegiance to a genre matters to him, he appreciates HipHop for being, in marketing parlance, "the sound of the street." He prefers to talk of extending a simple "street" sound rather than applying

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SHEILA JORDAN *the last* **Jazz Singer**

**Kenny Mathieson
trades licks with the premier
bop-and-after vocalist.
Photo by Norman Anderson**

A SLEEPY Sheila Jordan answers her room phone. She has flown into Edinburgh from a gig in Dublin, and for some reason has had a rare sleepless night until, as is always the way of it, finally falling off just a couple of hours earlier. Nevertheless, she insists I come up as arranged, and by the time I make the two flights of stairs, she is dressed, pretty much awake, and ready to talk at length about her life and times in the business of singing jazz.

Jordan is one of the singers who can lay unequivocal claim to the title of jazz singer, whatever it may ultimately be taken to mean. She has never taken digressions into more commercial regions, but has pursued her obsession with a musical form inspired by the example of Charlie Parker, whom she first heard — and later sat in with — in Detroit.

"It wasn't so much that I tried to translate what he did on the horn to the voice," she insists, "it was more the inspiration and the spiritual aspect of his playing that touched me musically. I have been singing since I was three, but I really didn't know what kind of music I wanted to sing until I was in my early teens, and I heard Bird on a jukebox in my school. That was the music I wanted to sing."

Jordan had been born in considerable poverty in the South, and had effectively been raised by her grandparents, but had moved to Detroit, Michigan to live with her mother and attend high school in her early teens. Detroit proved to be rich bop territory, and the aspiring singer grew up with Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris and Kenny Burrell all in the neighbourhood.

"Jazz is black music, and it was very easy for me to identify with black people at that time. I hung around with black kids, which was not approved by the police in Detroit at the time, but I felt very comfortable with them, much more so than with white kids. I had been so tormented by white kids when I



was much younger that I felt I trusted black kids more."

In a very real sense, Jordan's ability to identify with the perceived outsider carried over into her singing career, when she began to work in the male preserve of jazz clubs. Many musicians had what we will call an ambivalent attitude to women, and especially to women instrumentalists (singers were more the norm), but Jordan was fortunate in receiving encouragement from pianist Lennie Tristano, after making the move to New York in the early 1950s.

"I think the main thing I learned from Tristano was that it was alright to be a woman and do music — he was very open to women in jazz, and very encouraging in that way. His first wife, Judy, played saxophone, and he had a lot of women students, most of whom were instrumentalists — I think I was his first singer.

"He didn't have any of the prejudice about women improvisers you often found. You used to hear the expression 'she played good for a chick', or 'she plays like a cat', and that kind of prejudice existed. The problems for a singer were more things like club-owners wanting to know what you looked like rather than what you sounded like, or having them come on to you. I didn't have too many problems that way, but then I didn't have that many gigs either. Maybe they didn't find me attractive, who knows! I never paid that stuff much mind, to be honest."

JORDAN is entirely self-taught as a singer, and describes her early training as largely a matter of listening over and over again to records, trying to work out what was going on. The few lessons she took from Tristano, however, "freed me up a lot in phrasing, and got me over my fear of trying out my crazy ideas during the sessions he used to have, where everybody was trying experimental things."

For most of her singing career, Jordan also held down a job in New York, and was able to work only in the kind of gigs which allowed her to sing just as she wanted. The style which she developed is firmly rooted in jazz, and reveals an acute awareness of the demands of the medium.

A lot of what passes for jazz singing is no more than mainstream popular singing given a little extra touch of swing or a remedial application of scat, as though that in itself was all that were required. The discipline is much more demanding than that, and Jordan is a wonderful example of it.

Her *Lost And Found* (Muse) album was the surprise winner of *The Wire* album poll in 1991, but a deserved one. She has not recorded all that much over the years, but the records she does issue are invariably gems. She favours the space of duos (as in *Sheila* (Steeplechase) with Arild Anderson or *Old Time Feeling* (Muse) with Harvie Swartz) or trios (*Lost And Found*, or the classic *Portrait Of Sheila*, described by Will Friedwald in his monumental study *Jazz Singing* (Quartet) as "Blue Note's only important vocal record").

Her affinity with jazz horn-players is entirely obvious, and

is clearly the influence which has generated many of the distinctive qualities in her work. Live, she even holds the microphone as if it were a saxophone or trumpet, and the lasting impression which Parker made on her work remains palpable, both in her sinuous scat lines and in her treatment of melody.

Horn players are often credited with vocal qualities – we liken their sound to singing, crying, wailing, and so on. Jordan demonstrates that the parallel works both ways, adopting variations of pitch and tonality, modes of phrasing, singing behind or ahead of the beat, and peculiar intervallic leaps, all of which stem directly from instrumental values.

She is, though, a superb interpreter of words as well, caressing her way through a ballad like "I Concentrate On You" or "The Thrill Is Gone" with scrupulous attention to the emotion engendered in the lyrics.

"I sang from a need to sing, and to express myself emotionally, because of many things in my life. It was a release of the pain and the obstacles in my way as a child and a teenager, and when I work with other musicians, what I really like is to find players who play from the heart.

"Scat singing is a whole different art form – it's a sound, and it's a feeling, and it comes from within, but it's on a level with lyric singing, and you put the same emotion into it. I never study scat, I study listening to chord changes and singing over chord changes, but you have to do that work in order to know what you are doing in scat singing.

"Some people say it's essential to scat in order to be a jazz singer, but I don't think that is true at all. Billie Holiday never did it, so that blows that theory straight off. I like to scat, but you really have to learn the tune first. I taught myself to scat by inventing syllables to sing along with Charlie Parker records that didn't have words."

JORDAN is now singing full time, and her next album for Muse is a duo with Mark Murphy and the *Lost And Found* instrumental trio of Kenny Barron, Harvie Swartz and Ben Riley. She sang with Murphy in George Gruntz's jazz-opera *Cosmopolitan Greetings*, and the album sessions grew from there.

"I decided to go full time after I got laid off from the office job. They offered me a transfer, but I always wondered what it would be like just to sing, so I decided to take the chance and find out. I have never stopped singing, all I have done is sang a little less or a little more, but I always kept the job, and the reason I did that was to keep the music pure.

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LEISURE SERVICES



FRED ANDERSON AND *Chicago* VON *calling again* FREEMAN

CHOOSE THE paid of words most likely to evince groans from a discriminating jazz fan. Did "jazz session" and "local musicians" come to mind? Two of the faintest praises in marquee-ville. Isn't it strange, then, that two of the toughest tenors in Chicago, Fred Anderson and Von Freeman, would both actively embrace their *local* status? Big fish in a big pond? Stranger still, why would these world-class musicians consider jam-sessions to be among their favorite possible gigs? Taking lemons and making lemonade? What gives?

In the first place, Freeman and Anderson share a regional perspective borne out of practical circumstances and life choices. Uneasy with terms like "neglected" or "overlooked" (Freeman has called himself a "very popular unknown musician"), they each take responsibility for their own low-ish profile. Says Von: "I guess Fred thinks like I do: you just let the chips fall wherever they fall. My son Chico's been trying to get me out of Chicago for ten years. But I feel comfortable here. I'm busy trying to learn this horn and learn music. If fame comes it comes, if it doesn't it doesn't. I've never sought it and I don't think Fred has either. My calling is to keep trying to grow."

Anderson elaborates on the nitty-gritty: "I'm so busy out here just tryin' to survive, you know? Keep the bread coming, keep my health going, pay the rent. I never really think about the lights. I mean, that's cool. But I don't have time to think about being a star. So, basically it's my own fault. I haven't done a lot of travelling for the simple reason that I had a family and bought a house. That was my priority and I was realistic about it. I knew the kind of music we were playing, and there was no-way I could have sacrificed them for that. I love the music, don't get me wrong. But that was the way it was. I said: 'I can do it right here in Chicago.' After my kids had grown, I thought maybe I'd have a chance to do it. And then I got hooked up with *this* . . ."

This is a jam-session that Anderson arranges every other Sunday afternoon at the Velvet Lounge, the small bar he owns and tends on the near-south side. Further south, Von (or Vonski, as he prefers) oversees a jam-session late into every

Tuesday night, as he has for the last ten years, at the New Apartment Lounge, a two-room club (one red room, one blue room) replete with shag 'n' rug, a stage that obstructs the entrance and an amoebic bar. "I think Von put it this way," explains Anderson. "He said: 'Jam-sessions can be very good or

John Corbett reports from the windy city on two under-appreciated masters of Chicago jazz.

they can be very bad.' But even the bad times, you can probably get some positive things out of, you know? It gives a person a chance to deal with themselves. That's there whether they play well or not. The thing about it is that they were doin' *something*."

More than just an indication of their beneficent, easy-going personalities, the local, open-mike orientation of these jazzmen indicates a broader current in the music. In fact, it suggests the existence of a vital and largely unrecognized movement, an underground lounge scene. Chicago jazz used to thrive in the high-class clubs downtown and on 55th Street, where local jobbers would set up house to play behind a constantly rotating cast of national and international stars. With the virtual elimination of those outliers in the 1960s, jazz was pushed into the ubiquitous lounges that dot the Chicago map. It's the school of the windy city streets, graduating an alter-roster of shadowy luminaries like pianists Brad Williams and Jodie Christian, tenor saxophonist E. Parker McDougal and Lin Halliday, drummer Wilbur Campbell and trumpeter Brad Woode to name but a few. And the music isn't cocktail-tinkling fare. Indeed, it runs the stylistic gambit from the street-smart bop'n'ballads of Von Freeman to the post-Ornette-ology of Fred Anderson.

FREEMAN IS the quintessence of Chicago jazz. He has lived his entire 70 years in Chicago, starting on piano as a toddler and moving to reeds when he turned seven. Self-taught until adolescence, he attended DuSable High, where, like many of Chicago's greats, he fell under the tutelage of the great educator Captain Walter Dyett. For a year, just before he was drafted into the U.S. Navy, Freeman was in the big band of Horace Henderson, Fletcher's younger brother. "Henderson knew how to rehearse a band," he remembers. "I was only goin' on 17 at the time, so I was the young kid on the block. He had all the pros in the band—I was old enough to know that I was way over my head!"

After a four-year stint in the Navy band, Von returned to civilian life and formed a group with his brothers, guitarist

Anderson/Freeman

George and drummer Bruz. With the help of McKee Fitch, the famous Chicago booking agent, they landed a permanent spot at the Pershing Ballroom that lasted until the end of the 40s. "We were lucky enough to play behind Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, everybody of note from that era. That happened and changed my life, really. Changed my direction, hearing Bird. 'Cause I was always out of Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins..." Freeman catches himself, then adds: "... Still am! still am!"

In the late 40s, Freeman also played with Sun Ra's Arkestra. "The band was in its formative stages," says Freeman. "Sun Ra's just a great man. He hasn't changed any, still doing the same thing now he was doing then. I learned a lot from him and his group: Pat Patrick, who just passed, and John Gilmore." In fact, it was with Patrick on baritone sax that Freeman first recorded on a single with the Andrew Hill Combo from the early 50's. From then until 1976, when he first toured Europe, the energetic saxophonist played continuously in his home town.

Still today, on most nights in Chicago, Vonski is playing somewhere. He's a shameless man who loves to emcee events, talking on endlessly about nothing in particular. When he puts the reed in his mouth, though, things acquire a point. His rich, sometimes stinging tone took years to develop, and he has absolutely pinpoint phrasing. Most relaxed as a live performer, Freeman's recording career has been spotty, with a session for Atlantic and two LPs for Nessa in the 1970's, collaborations with Chico on Black Saint and India Navigation in the 1970's, and a new CD called *Walkin' Tuff*, made for Chicago's small Southport label. As a guest, he appears on numerous records with people like Willis Jackson and Milt Trenier, and he takes some nasty solos on a funky Groove Merchant record with his brother George Freeman.

Though he legitimately claims the Prez-Hawk-Bird lineage, Von has remained open to newer developments. For this, he freely admits a debt to his saxophonist son: "I learned a lot from Chico. He keeps me current, and he says I've helped him a lot. I listen to all of the young guys and I came up with almost all of the old guys. So I try to find a middle ground — not get too far out and not get too far in." Likewise, he credits the younger musicians who come out to jam with him: "See, the main thing is just to *hang*? It's so hard just to stay in there. And sometimes you say, 'Aw shucks, I think I'll retire.' But there's still so much to learn. That's the way I look at music. Guys say 'Man, you can play the horn backwards! What is there to learn?' I say there's plenty to learn, always. I'm up on the bandstand with cats half my age, [drummer] Michael Raynor's a third my age. But I've learned a lot from him. He's young, vibrant, stays into it. This way you get older, but you don't get old!"

The impetus behind all of Freeman's jam session work is not selfish, however. He offers it as an opportunity for younger players to learn from a master. Freeman acknowledges: "I was helped like that, so I never forget it. A lot of people took me

under their wings. So I try to perpetuate the same. It's no big deal, just somebody's gotta do it, y'know. It's relatively easy for me to do it, because I'm just a local musician. So we just talk, we're on the same level. I try to encourage them best as I can. I encourage them through example more than any teaching or anything. Try to play well, try to dress well, treat the audience well and have people watch. Through example. This music, if it's not perpetuated, it will die out."

"I REMEMBER Von playing in the 1950s with Lefty Bates, left-hand guitar player," says Fred Anderson. "I was practising like mad in the '50s, but I wasn't playing professionally. I used to go sit and listen to him, I'd just be absorbing things. One day he had a chance to hear me. He told me: 'Keep on working on what you're working on, man!' One thing about Von, he encouraged me, never did discourage me. Always had something positive to say, whether he meant it or not!"

Seven years Freeman's junior, Anderson was born in Louisiana and moved up to Chicago just before the U.S. entered WWII. He, too played piano as a child. At 12 he started playing tenor saxophone, and after the war was over a Navy friend turned him on to Charlie Parker. For the duration of the 1950s, Anderson was a dedicated music-sponge, practising but never playing out. "I had a lot of respect for the music and I was determined to see what was going on, sit back, listen and sort out the things that I thought were important to play. I'd listen to the guys talk and they would tell me about the chord changes and different things."

After working diligently on the fundamentals, Anderson finally began playing professionally in the early 1960s. An early concert came about when Sun Ra took the Arkestra to Canada, on to New York, and permanently out of Chicago. "They left here around 1961, and John Gilmore had a gig down here somewhere on Michigan Avenue. He called me up and gave the gig to me." More regularly, Anderson had started working with a bunch of musicians who would soon form the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Doggedly independent and strongly under the influence of Ornette Coleman, they played and presented their own music. With Anderson on tenor, Joseph Jarman on reeds, Billy Brimfield (who would become to Anderson what Bobby Bradford was to James Carter) on trumpet, the late Christopher Clark on bass and New Orleans drummer Arthur Reed, the first official AACM concert took place in 1964 at a rented space on 79th Street. Soon thereafter Anderson recorded with Jarman for Delmark. Still gigging around, he acquired a reputation that occasionally got him kicked off bandstands. "We took the music out a little ways. On sessions, we wouldn't play the licks that the people were used to hearing. Eddie Harris started telling people: 'Man, there's this guy in Chicago, Fred Anderson. You guys talk about *yourself* playin' out, Jack!' All of this earned Anderson a moniker, bestowed on him by Maurice McIntyre: "Lone Prophet of the

Prairie," he laughs: "Ain't that somethin! But it's right. I was alone; nobody listening."

In fact, a younger generation of players was listening, and the 1970s were very productive for Anderson. Fresh out of Yale, trombonist George Lewis returned to Chicago and asked to play with Anderson. Groups featuring Lewis, multiple reedman Douglas Ewart, powerhouse drummer Hamid Drake and twisted trumpeter Brimfield played as regularly as a free jazz band can. Over this period, Anderson's sound changed somewhat, as well. After experimenting extensively with extended techniques, he came to prefer a direct intonation. "Clarity is very important. Being able to play each note and have each note be distinct. It's alright to do all these effects; Trane did a lot of them. But I play with a full sound, I don't subtone anything. Trane, he had this sound early. And I think Coltrane got that from Chu Berry, hitting everything right on the button. But you gotta have some air, some lungs, to support it. So I quit smoking. And most cats are scared of the bottom of the saxophone. But I play the bottom just like the top. That's what I mean by a full sound, all over the saxophone." Like Freeman, recording has been little more than a side activity for Anderson, and the majority of his releases have been on European labels.

In the late '70s Anderson opened a north-side club, the Birdhouse, which he replaced in 1982 with the Velvet Lounge. "We used to get up on stage at 12:00 and play till 4:00 in the morning," he says. "That was important for those guys, gave them a chance to come out and play. You've got to remember, jam sessions were just above over. The young guys didn't have anywhere to go and play. When they play with me, they have a chance to really express themselves freely. That's what playing here every other Sunday is about. I let them do pretty much whatever they want, so they see what's really happening. Some come and play, and then I don't see them for a while - that's cool. They go home and woodshed. And that's what I

used to do!"

WHERE FREEMAN insists that "the name of the game is to grow," Anderson breaks down the jazz credo one step further: "You try to be an extension and some kind of contribution." In definition, the word "lounge" carries a strong connotation of laziness and loafing. In practice, Von and Fred know better.

SELECTED RECORDS BY VON FREEMAN:

- Don't It Right Now* - Atlantic, 1972 (SD 1628)
- Have No Fear* - Nessa, 1975 (n-6)
- Serenade and Blues* - Nessa, 1979 (n-11)
- Freeman and Freeman* (with Chico) - Indra Navigation, 1989 (IN 1070)
- Walkin' Tuff* - Southport (SSD 0010)

SELECTED RECORDS BY FRED ANDERSON:

- Song For* (with Joseph Jarman) - Delmark (DS-410)
- Accents* (with Dieter Glawisching) - EMI, 1977
- Another Place* - Moers, 1978 (01058)
- Dark Day* - Message, 1979 (0004)
- The Missing Link* - Link, 1983 (n-23)

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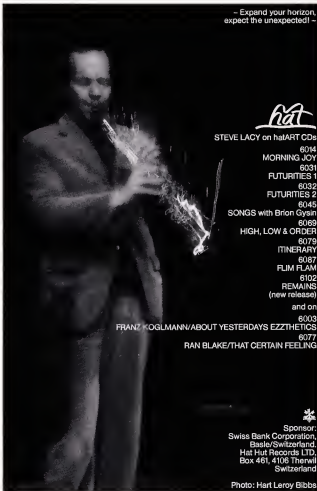
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Photo: Hart Leroy Bibbs



INVISIBLE

★ JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER ★

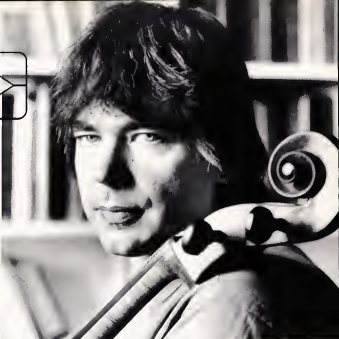
JUKE BOX

Every month we test a musician with a series of records which they're asked to comment on and mark out of five – with no prior knowledge of what it is they're hearing.

Julian Lloyd Webber
was tested by Philip Watson

THREE-YEAR younger brother of musical magnate Andrew, (son of the late pianist, organist and director of the London College of Music William Lloyd Webber), cellist Julian Lloyd Webber has always pursued a quieter, more classical musical path. Originally taught on piano, he turned to the cello at an early age because he found it to be, as he still does, "the most powerfully moving instrument of them all". A concert performer since he was 17, 41-year-old Lloyd Webber has performed and recorded almost all the major works for cello including the Elgar, Dvorak and Hadyn cello concertos and the Britten and Shostakovich cello sonatas. This month sees the release of his latest recording: Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme and Myaskovsky's Cello Concerto (Philips).

As well as his musical activities, Lloyd Webber has written the autobiographical *Travels With My Cello* and compiled a collection of stories and impressions of Pablo Casals. He is also a great fan of horror writing having selected a collection of stories under the title, *Short, Sharp, Shock*, and he is the *Sunday Express*'s horror critic. Even more horrifically, he claims, as a counterpoint to Nigel Kennedy's fanaticism for Aston Villa, that he is a fervent supporter of Leyton Orient FC.



PABLO CASALS

"Prelude" from Bach's Solo Cello Suite No 4 in E flat major (EMI).

(Straight away) Well, I think I know that. It's Pablo Casals, the fourth Bach Cello Suite. This is very interesting, you see I got it straightaway because the playing is so utterly distinctive. The Casals Bach Suites are absolute classic cello recordings and it's very hard to follow interpretations like that. I have studiously avoided recording them because I have never want to make records unless I feel they have a chance of being the very best. And so I don't feel ready yet to equal this. I want to be sure that I am absolutely at the peak of my capabilities before I do them. Maybe I'll never be that sure.

This is absolutely the supreme cello performance in every way – in the composition, the music and his interpretation. You see, Casals was really the first to do these Bach Suites and it changed the face of cello playing. Not only did he revolutionise cello technique by doing much less swooping and sliding around the instrument than a lot of his contemporaries did – this is very pure cello playing – but he was also the first to show what could be done with the instrument. This is a very personal account of these suites, but at the same time you know there is an absolute desire to put across the music

at its best. Before Casals tackled these suites they were regarded as just studies – not thought of as music at all. People were very surprised when he started playing them in public, but they really are the greatest works for the instrument.

Mark?

Five.

MYSTISLAV ROSTROPOVICH

"Largo" from Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No 2 (Op 126) (Deutsche Grammophon)

(Straight away) Oh, Shostakovich No 2. This is very interesting. I'll have to listen to it some more. It's Rostropovich, isn't it? It's a marvellous piece – I was at the first performance of this concerto and it made a strange impression on me because I was used to the first concerto which is much more direct. The first concerto is an absolute masterpiece – one of the great cello concertos – and probably this is too, even though it's not as often played because it's much tougher. I'm an absolute Shostakovich fanatic and my new record is actually conducted by his son Maxim. I think Shostakovich is the greatest composer of this century – no other composer has such a body of work. He's a 20th century Beethoven. This is definitely another five stars because of the way Rostropovich approached the cello. It was hearing his series

of concerts in London when I was 13 that inspired me to become a professional cellist. He wrote in his programme notes to that series that he felt the cello was "an orator in troubled times". He was acting as an ambassador for the instrument and trying to do something with music which went beyond politics. He was speaking to the people through his cello, and that really struck a chord in me. Rostropovich is probably the greatest cello of the century and his approach to this concerto is consummate, as usual.

DAVE HOLLAND

"Inception" from *Life Cycle* (ECM)

I don't know who it is but it's a good cello sound – I like it.

Well, it doesn't sound like jazz to me—if one has to categorize it—it is more like folk music. I am very envious of people who can improvise. I did some concerts with Stephane Grappelli once and I just didn't dare improvise next to that guy. I just sort of hung around the tunes and didn't get too far away from them.

Do you think it's possible, as Nigel Kennedy and Wynton Marsalis have attempted, to straddle the worlds of both jazz and classical?

No. I think that if a classical player cries to play jazz and does it successfully, basically, at that point, he is a jazz player. I think it should be possible to do both, but I don't think they really blend comfortably. And some attempts at trying to cross over sound so awkward, so self-conscious. I mean nothing is worse than rock music played by a symphony orchestra - it's just embarrassing, embarrassing. I thought this was very good playing, very rhythmically strong, and an instrument like the cello being played in this way can sound quite uncomfortable. And it's amazing that he's primarily a bass player - all the tuning's different. I mean, I would like to be able to play the bass like that. I enjoyed it. I would like to hear the rest of the album.

Mark: 2

Four

STEVEN ISSERLIS

"The Protecting Veil" from *The Protecting Veil* by John Tavener (Virgin Classics)

(Straight away) Steven Isserlis; the new Taverner. It reminds me in a funny way of the cello solo in Messiaen's *Quartet For The End of*

Time. I first heard this piece at its prom debut and I think it's really good that there has been such a positive reaction to a new cello piece. And I hope this release sells very well which I believe it is already. But my initial reaction to it was that although on first listening I thought it was fantastic it didn't hold my attention to the end. I was expecting it to . . . I don't know, I wanted something more and I kept getting the same. It's quite moving though, it does get you right through to the end.

It is being hailed in some quarters as a modern masterpiece. Do you think that's an exaggeration?

Yes. (Pause.)

Okay, what do you think of Juventus's players?

Oh very good, he plays very well on this, very good. He's very strong-willed, strong-minded and has strong ideas about music he wants to play. And in these days of everybody being pushed in all kinds of different directions that is very unusual. This is a very difficult piece to play - I bet it did his bowing arm some good. His playing is very, very well-controlled and that's what this piece is all about. I'd like to split the marks here. He's given a tremendous first performance of this work, so for that, five, but for the content three.

FRED SHERRY

"Praise To The Eternity Of Jesus" from *Quartet For The End of Time* by Olivier Messiaen (RCA Victor Gold Seal)

actually very recently recorded this. This is very interesting to me because there aren't many recordings of this work. This is a wonderful piece, but I think the cellist is much too full-blooded. You know, Messiaen wrote this in a concentration camp and there should be an absolute sense of desolation. There isn't on this—it's too upfront, too fast. Messiaen put *semaquaver* equals 46 on the score; it's the slowest metronome mark I have ever seen. And he says "exac" on it. Listen, it's got so much faster now. Oh, I know this version: it's Fred Sherry and Yasha. He plays it very well, this is a good performance, but it's not what Messiaen wrote. I find that troubling. To me what they are doing is a cop-out; it's as if they've just given up with it really. Listen now—it's almost double speed—75 or something, so there has to be two ratings again. Five for the music and, because it fails, one for the performance. It just fails the basic test of trying to do what the composer wanted; it's an inauthentic performance. They just decided that they knew

better than Messaien which really aggravates me. If the responsibility of the artist isn't to the composer, what is he doing? He could be said to be wanking basically. I mean, the artist exists to serve the composer. It has to be a marriage doesn't it: this is a divorce.

PIERRE FOURNIER

"Allegro Vivace" from Brahms Cello Sonata No 2 in F major, Op 99 (Decca)

continued on page 33





Madonna: the way forward?



WHY WE MUST DESTROY *the music industry*

**Mike Fish wonders how we got here,
and where we have to go next.**

MOST OF us get to hear little about the inner workings of the music industry, but there can't be many who didn't hear details of Richard Branson's recent sale of Virgin Records to EMI and wonder at the way things turn out. I know I did. Branson's only a few years older than me, after all. He started a mail-order record shop from a phone box. Then, in the end, he ended up selling it all for several hundred million pounds. Not bad for a man without much of an ear for music. Yet it was music that provided this wherewithal. Records and cassettes and (eventually) CDs, sold in their millions, with the publishing rights to that music standing up as profitable in their own right, too.

It's a little odd, looking back to only the mid-60s, to think that pop music was deemed by many of the industry barons of that time as perhaps just another passing phase, like swing, or bebop, or skiffle. Pop singles sold in countless numbers, but

the moneyspinners were long-players, and until *Sgt Pepper* at least, individual pop albums seldom sold in very large numbers. It was still Frank Sinatra and Doris Day and Ray Conniff who counted. Jazz may have been a minority music by then – it lost its main audience as soon as Charlie Parker started playing, perhaps – but it had its niche in a marketplace which tended to respect a kind of democracy among musics. We like to think of this as an enlightened age – where we can go into a shop and buy records of Bulgarian singets or Middle Eastern dance bands as well as the latest Chicago dance 12-inch or European improv session – yet the record catalogues of the past are scarcely any less diverse. Consider the vast range of so-called ethnic musics recorded in the USA in the years prior to the second war. A browse through Arhoolie's archive of reissues shows the incredible extent of that recording. World music is nothing very new: it's just the marketing that has changed.

THE MARKETING. Nothing gets in the way of music like the selling of music. It's an argument which has persisted long enough to make it sound like the most luddite way of thinking. With punk, the first concerted attempt to unseat a business hegemony which had grown corpulent on the royalties of Crosby, Stills and Nash albums, a counterculture attack on the industry's bastions seemed like a real possibility for change. Of course the music was far less "radical" than anything which had been going on for years in, say, free improvisation; but it gathered a popular base to itself, the only kind of pragmatic base which an industry based on profit can understand. And the music business assimilated most of that movement as profitably as it could. With the advent of a group like Culture Club, which rose to chart power in much the same, er, trappings as The Clash but proffered a philosophy of transience that settled everything back into simple pop-music economics – no wonder Dave Rimmer called his book about the group *Like Punk Never Happened* – whatever impact 1976 had had seemed eternally diffused.

Maybe other areas of music have their own, similar tale to tell: of artistic or popular breakthroughs that didn't so much go sour as get put to sleep. In the 80s, we saw huge changes in the treatment of both jazz and classical music: what will be the ultimate fallout of Wynton Marsalis and Courtney Pine, of Luciano Pavarotti and Nigel Kennedy? In these cases, it's a kind of reverse of the punk situation: major personalities are being made to confer more and wider attention on music which has suffered from a lack of "popularity". This time, the initiatives have come from within the business. These artists have been "made" to happen. But what does it mean for – well, "the music"?

It's sound thinking to be suspicious of principles which unite an audience, but if there's anything which brings together the readers of *The Wire*, it's an interest in disenfranchised kinds of music and musician, which could be almost any area which is neglected by the music business at large: major record companies, powerful concert promoters, influential media commentators – those interests which tend to feed our collective tastes. The paradox here is tied up in vague notions of artistic purity: if musicians are ignored by big-biz concerns, they're better off for it, able to remain under their own control and unsullied by the expurgating hand of commerce. Yet we all carry a cross for those hard-up martyrs who've been left in the cold by profit forecasts which leave no square inch for marginal mavericks. Is there no balance to be struck, no encouragement for the singular voice? How to make some provision for that "vast minority" (as Mel Tormé once characterised his audience, when questioned about how he'd survived The Beatles) of listeners, that huge cadre of players who aren't merely trying to emulate Dire Straits?

Because, at heart, the music business doesn't really want to know. Like an ecology turning bad, its available succour for players who create the innovations that support the mainstream is running dry. The most alarming thing about the

business in the past ten years has been its capacity for gigantism: its ability to cannibalise itself in the interests of sheer obesity. The interesting balance between smaller, more entrepreneurial labels – Virgin, Island, the numberless independents which paddle around in the shallow end of the business – and the old-fashioned giants has been sundered by the obsessive buying-up of anything that looks like a tasty, profitable plateful. Once even bigger international conglomerate such as Bertelsmann (who bought RCA) and Sony (who snaffled up Columbia) entered the picture, perhaps that was inevitable. There are still, of course, many small-to-medium-size independents that record and distribute much of the sort of music that gets written about in these pages, and there have even been revivals and new surges of direction: among the American hardcore scene, where independence is a fanatically guarded badge of honour, and in jazz operations such as Hat Hut or Black Saint or Splash(h), which have compromised little in creating catalogues that rival or even surpass the great American independents (Riverside, Prestige) of yore.

These outposts, though, retain a kind of dead-end integrity. Since they're never going to break out of a small, restricted area of performance and audience, they're never going to influence any decision made by the business as a whole. To the controlling powers, they're an irrelevance, or simply not a known factor, which is both their strength – no editorial interference here! – and their misfortune. Does it matter? Only if one is interested in change, perhaps. And perhaps it is time

JAZZ BURSARIES

The Arts Council offers grants to *individual* musicians/composers working in the jazz idiom. Applications will be judged under two categories: a) the developmental and exploratory, eg the study of new techniques/instruments/ideas; b) the preparatory, eg the writing, rehearsal or copying costs of a new project which will later be performed, recorded or broadcast.

Monies for the scheme are limited; bursaries awarded last year fell between £500-£3,000.

The scheme is open only to *professional* musicians/composers and is therefore closed to full-time students. Bursaries are not given for the funding of educational activities nor for the purchase of instruments or equipment. Those awarded jazz bursaries in the last two years will not be eligible. Applicants must be British or have been resident in this country for at least five years, and be working in England.

Application forms can be obtained by sending in a stamped addressed envelope to Martin Scott, Music Officer, Arts Council of Great Britain, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ.

The closing date for completed applications is MONDAY 22 JUNE 1992.





Destroy!

for change.

RECENT CHANGE, after all, has been skin-deep and meretricious. Consider what some called "The Jazz Revival". Six years after a ball started rolling with *Journey To The Urge Within* and the talk of a school of young, ambitious players ready to storm past jazz's difficult image, the charge has run out of steam. A potential, as the music business might see it, still exists for British jazz, but it's likely to be wasted through ignorance and incompetence within the industry: with jazz marketing caught between pop-appeal and serious-integrity, its shadowy position will be discarded because it's simply too difficult for the business to adjust to careers that can't be calibrated by pop-style success. The industry demand long-term winners – ask any MD what kind of artists he or she wants, and they'll say that they want players who'll last a lifetime in commercial terms – yet it needs short-terms returns as well. The ecological metaphor can accommodate this position, too: nobody ever thinks about the future consequence of all this effluence in the business.

A favourite after-dinner remark of professionals – lawyers, PR figures, managers – who come into contact with the higher echelons of the music industry is that nobody in the music business knows anything about music. It's not true, but to call that a falsehood may be going too far as well. Music is about going forward, yet the industry barons treat it as if it were only a kind of repertory, a back-catalogue of genres which new signings simply tuck into, their codification determining their place in a hierarchy of *Our Price* categories. There can never be a "shock of the new" in this business, because it's turned into a world of pure consumption. Some musicians used to be outraged at the use of the word "product" to describe their record, but that kind of dudgeon has faded away. The eskimo who feared that recording his music would drive its spirit away is probably searching for a deal at this moment.

The "independent" dream has faded, too. The collective ideals of operations such as Crass and Throbbing Gristle have either sunk from view or settled into a cottage-industry replica of the real thing, as establishmentarian as their bigger brothers. The problem is that the aim of all sides is basically the same: to sell as many records to as many people as possible. The politics of growth may be killed music as surely as they're killing the planet, but what alternative is there?

ANYWAY, is music being destroyed at the hands of these heartless robber-barons? Of course not. There is more music than ever, more records, more everything. That would be the answer of any sympathetic observer of the business. But the processes of composing and performing music have surely never been so rigorously structured and predetermined by non-musical masters, at every level. Mozart wrote for his patrons, but they didn't come to him with a Shep Pettibone remix of *Così Fan Tutte*. Charlie Parker may have been coddled

by string orchestras, but he didn't have to worry about his paunch showing him up in his next video.

These are, perhaps, mere details in a musician's life. As the industry gets bigger, though, its motivations put an ever tighter squeeze on the rationale behind whatever decisions musicians take, for the way they work, and the way their music will sound. The size of individual ambitions has been heightened by the power placed in the hands of a very few artists – Michael Jackson, Madonna – and while those lofty figures may seem remote from the rest of us, their aspirations have set standards which the business must try and emulate, or better, in keeping with business philosophy.

It hasn't led to a "crisis in art" quite yet, perhaps. It's not as if music is going to undergo some kind of conceptual jackknife and fall apart. It's more like a long, slow atrophy of form and content. Many will scoff at such a suggestion: the truckload of interesting and worthwhile records which get reviewed here every month never declines in number, and there is always more absorbing music talked about in these pages than people can possibly listen to at full stretch. But that may have more to do with information overload than some notion of inherent quality. Passing these ideas into a mainstream, and having it reflect them back, is the organic process which seems most like an endangered species: and without that, marginalisation leads to starvation. The differences between that mainstream and those margins are clearer now than they may ever have been.

You may be disappointed to hear that I have few panaceas to offer. It's an easy matter to destroy this music business: all we have to do is stop buying records, going to concerts, or listening. In real life, though, voting with the wallet has somewhat less of an impact when it's just us enlightened few doing it. Nor is power concentrated in the hands of the creators, aside from those select few at the top end of the selling scale.

Yet the prevailing trends which dominate industry strategy must change before a creative implosion forces them to. Music followers are a fickle lot: they can get bored. Without the spice of someone like – to go back to the beginning, and only because there's no obvious better example – Richard Branson backing music which, certainly in Virgin's early days, hinted at a bridge between mainstream and avant garde sympathies, boredom will overwhelm this business. If maverick entrepreneurs are a thing of some hippie past in big-company terms, what the biz needs more than anything is a few – just a few – bosses and lieutenants who are prepared to subvert accepted corporate wisdom and take creative decisions. And then have them ratified, and followed up, and left uncompromised by balancing acts. If an artist is signed, let them work. If a subsidiary is established, don't pad it with mainstream fluff. If an enterprise shakes, steady it. That kind of thing.

Now it's the industry's turn to scoff. And some of them may say, hey, we're doing this stuff now. But ask musicians, ask listeners like us. They're not. ■

Ah, I think I know who this is. Is it Jacqueline du Pré? Then it's Fournier. My teacher. It's interesting that I should think that it was du Pré. Fournier has a sound that normally I would recognise at once, but I'm very suspicious of some of these digital remasterings because works on CD can sound totally different. It's a serious problem because it's really awful what they've done to these things. It puts you off CDs really. And it's even been done to one of my recordings which, on its little journey from vinyl to cassette to CD, the record company decided to brighten up. I mean, we took so much trouble at the actual sessions to get the sound that we wanted – and they brightened it up!

How do you rate Fournier?

Normally the thing I would praise Fournier for is his sound – a beautiful, warm cello sound – which I don't hear on this. That for me was his greatness because he has one of the most beautiful cello sounds there has ever been. On some of his recordings you think how could a cello sound better than that – it sings, it's so free. So often you hear cellists and they're forcing it or there's something held in about the sound, but Fournier is so completely unrestricted. His is a completely

open cello sound – I don't hear it on this which is why I got it wrong. This is a little bit strange to race then, but for the music, five, for the playing, three to four, and the sound, one.

TRISTAN HONSINGER

"No South" from *Company 1* (Incus) with Derek Bailey (g) and Maarten Altena . . . (b)

Oh dear. Oh God. This reminds me of a tape that a composer sent me once – a home recording – something he wanted me to play. This is a no-go area for me. It's unlistenable. And badly played. (Pause.)

Is there anything positive you would like to say about it?

No.

JACQUELINE DU PRÉ

"Adagio" from Elgar's Cello Concerto in E minor, Op 85 (EMI)

(Straight away) Du Pré. This is the Barbirolli version. It's a classic cello recording. It's quite interesting that the two people who have done most to bring this concerto to light were both female cellists: Beatrice Harrison with Elgar, and du Pré. Because the work had got off to a disastrous start at its first performance – it wasn't quite the sort of Elgar people wanted to hear at the time. The war had just been won and he presented this basically very withdrawn piece which only in the last movements begins to show a little bit of optimism. I think people were surprised and perhaps disappointed by the piece. But it's really a tremendously emotional work, of all cello concertos this one goes straight to the heart. And du Pré's playing on this is unique and, I think, unmatchable. It is very difficult for me to comment on this because I play this work a lot and it's been my most successful classical recording. When it came to my recording of this I actually felt very happy about it because my recording is very different to hers, and so it was justified as another interpretation, something totally different.

Marks?

Five for work and performance.

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print run *This month Hopey Glass zines her way through the underground, while Andy Hamilton rereads Derek Bailey on Improvisation.*

Improvisation: Its Nature And Practice In Music

BY DEREK BAILEY
The British Library National Sound Archive £10.95

THIS IS the most important book on improvisation – the craft, the edge, the leap – that you're likely to meet. It has chapters on all the main forms – Indian music, flamenco, Western classical music, rock, jazz and free improvisation. In this new edition, coinciding with the Channel 4 TV series, Derek Bailey has made some additions and revisions, and there's some striking, well-conceived and (I imagine) unimproved cover-art. But the most important thing is that the book is available again, and in a paperback edition, having been out of print for some time.

The theme is really the clash between two musical cultures: between the "perfection" aspired to by art (classical/straight) music, and the "imperfection" (transience, impermanence) embraced or tolerated, depending on your viewpoint, by improvisation. The style is memorable polemical, and we're left in no doubt (as if we could be) which side the author favours. "Baroque" was the last period when improvisation saw favour in Western art music, and in the chapter on it, Derek Bailey contrasts the situation today: "Formal, precious, self-absorbed, pompous, harbouring rigid conventions and carefully preserved hierarchical distinctions; obsessed with its geniuses and their timeless masterpieces, shunning the accidental and the unexpected: the world of classical music provides an unlikely setting for improvisation" (p. 19). Over the top? Well, I recently bought an acclaimed and still current classical textbook on orchestration, and under "Saxophone" it reads: "its tone has become, coincident with its ascendancy in the field of popular dance music, tremulous, oversweet, sentimental, and it is almost invariably played out of tune. The saxophone as played today cannot be used successfully in orchestral combinations . . .". Ignorant condescension on that level still needs challenging.

Evan Parker, John Zorn (new to this edition) and Steve Lacy speak their collective wisdom; all, of course, challenge the classical



Andrew Potocary

hegemony. Gavin Bryars explains how he turned away from, and (in this edition) returned to improvisation. Lacy's advocacy in particular is always sane, lucid and passionate. On Derek Bailey's "instrumental impulse", neglected by 'straight' music: "The instrument – that's the matter – the stuff – your subject"; on musical value: "The only criterion is: 'Is this stuff alive or dead?' " (p. 56).

Perhaps Derek has mellowed a little. He came in for some flak for saying that Company-style improv is "non-idiomatic" (and therefore style-less, original, free). In his new conclusion he writes: "It seems to me now that the difference between free improvisation and idiomatic improvisation is not a fundamental one. Freedom for the free improviser is, like the ultimate idiomatic expression for the idiomatic improviser, something of a Shangri-La". He hasn't mellowed on composition thought, and I'm sure still agrees with Evan Parker's comment that "if the score represents some kind of ideal performance, why does it ever have to be performed? Surely it would be better for the music-lover to read the score . . ." (p. 80). Brahms and Schoenberg (for instance) might have agreed with the assumption here. But maybe in the third edition the author will take up the hint from Stephen Hicks, improvising church organist, and close the gap a little between interpretation in classical music and improvisation: "interpretation has to have an element of improvisation as well" (p. 33).

It wouldn't be a disaster to admit that. The last word on the improviser's credo could still go to Steve Lacy: "It is something



to do with the 'edge'. Always being on the brink of the unknown and being prepared for the leap. And when you go on out there you have all your years of preparation and all your sensibilities and your prepared means but it is a leap into the unknown." Derek Bailey's fine book is testimony to that faith in the edge, the leap.

ANDY HAMILTON

Hopey Glass looks at music fanzines.

THERE'S A sea-change happening out there on the underground networks, that web of xeroxed zines that linked the crazed and the disaffected throughout the Western world. Maybe the global recession caused it; maybe it's the knock-on effect of the Fall of the East; maybe it's just generational exhaustion, weariness in the margins, time for something new.

What's passing, finally, is the furiously narrow xeroxed rage of the American Punk scene: muttering on the ground towards a new electric free jazz, edge, abstract, unreverent. What's also rising – outside the ever-larger metal hinterland – is America's very own Industrial Convulsion. Nurtured for some years now by cassette-exchange, it's beginning to manifest in public, spouting cyberpunk-libertarian rhetoric, shaded at the edges by the techno-pagan ethics of Psychic TV and the like. On a huge, unmarked scale.

For, the broadsheet of New York's New Music, is gone, unable to shed its cooled-out art-gallery ethos in time, as scruffiness and wild-eyed anger begin to speak their American presence once again. Pick up some offbeats (in guitar) Davey Williams and (viol-

ist) LaDonna Smith's occasional journal *The Improvisor* (1705 12th St., South Birmingham, Alabama 35205), which links up notions of pre- and post-punk improv (from Derek Bailey to Destroy All Monsters), as well as the many micro-ideologies and refusal philosophies these entail. Demanding theoretical essays, straightforwardly impressionistic LP, CD and cassette reviews.

Companions to this home-made but dispersed scene, for the longest time, were Mike Gunderloy's *Factsheet Five* (6 Arizona Avenue, Rensselaer, New York 12144-4502) and David Cinnadini's *Sound Choice* (PO Box 1251, Ojai, California 93023) (SC is a descendant, like the glossier and somewhat lazier *Optima*, of the legendary *Op* magazine). Both acted as vital information centres and bulletin boards for every potential bedroom noisemaker anywhere: both oozed punk/DIY ethos, in inky look and anarchist outlook, and both may not outlive their founder-editor's decision to quit (*FF*, more of a zine-of-zines directory, though it does cover music extensively, does have a new editorial team, but without Gunderloy, many are giving it little future).

The UK, weak on zines for some years, now has three (at least) that cater to this ever-spreading industrial techno-cybernetic tendency. *The Empty Quarter* (PO Box 87, Ilford, Essex IG1 3HJ, UK), Brian Duguid's *E.S.T.* (35 Fordington Avenue, Winchester SO22 5AN) and Antony Burnham's astonishing *Soft Watch* (70 Old Hinckley Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV10 0AB, UK). All three cover what Burnham calls the industrial-experimental-avant-garde-techno-electronic-outre scene (LFO to Zev! Front 242 to Philip Glass) as *E.S.T.* puts it the cyberworld inheritor of punk's otherzone mantle. *The Empty Quarter* is the broadsheet of a (same name, same address) mail-order firm with attitude, a bit slick, a bit glib, a bit pleased with itself and the music it concentrates on, but casing its catchment reasonably wide (#3 includes not-very-revealing interviews with Coil, Skin Chamber and Nitzer Ebb). Duguid at *E.S.T.* is easily the most hardass critic in this whole area, someone able to poke around knowledgeably without having to buy the whole shop, who knows why people mind about this stuff without necessarily thinking they're always right. #1 features a brave if somewhat poorly organised critique of the otherwise only-too-tolerated totalitarian imagery that litters this zone, Gristle to Laibach to Thee Grey Wolves. Interviews in #1 and

#2 include Northern sound-sculpture undergrounders Soviet France and Nocturnal Emissions.

Soft Watch is something else again - a vast directory (256 pp.) with reviews, of every tiny label and publication operating in this area, essential for industrial complete-niks, all put together by Antony Burnham. A Herculean, poorly-rewarded task, I'd imagine - but perhaps he doesn't do it for reward (he's already put out two weighty update-supplements since February). His approach to reviewing is deliberately open-

minded and maybe a bit woolly (but a more astringent or pucky voice would surely be wearing, over such a stretch): you get free sampler cassette with each issue.

All three are Desk-Top Published, more or less forward- rather than backward-looking, for a music whose rhetorics and debates are basically still to come. Those who want to explore what sort of a community would ultimately build itself round such leisure-listening could do worse than investing in a copy of *Vagabond* (13 Oswald Road, London SW17 7SS), edited by Jon Wozencroft

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Modes of transportation: Maarten Altena's Cities & Streets

One of music's greatest powers is to transport listeners, even those with marginal attentiveness. It is quite distant from music's ability to soothe deep emotions, to trigger mental activity, and to further pain. It is music's most domestic power. It is a common experience. You are sitting at a control, in your home, or in your automobile, listening to music. You may be engrossed by what you're hearing, or you may even be thinking of something else - food, money, sports. Suddenly you're somewhere else. Nowhere even vaguely familiar. Somewhere else altogether.

Tonight's *Seizure* is remarkable. You're there only for a matter of seconds, minutes at best.

Maarten Altena's recordings always capture such headbashed moments, and *Cities & Streets* is no exception. Altena composes vigorous, subterranean, and delights of head. His music is a complex of rapid impressions. So there's little chance of you remembering where you are for the entirety of his program.

A sensitivity that Altena, and the electronic music community, underestimates, precision, situation, beauty and beauty is name what analogous to the eyes that watches through official, commercial, industrial and residential sections of a city. It is the same story, it's not only, but it's name, and its nature.

is enough for a coherent story. *Cities & Streets* is an hour of such dislocations. But, this takes on something else altogether. Bill Stevenson, March 1991

MAARTEN ALTENA	Full ART
QUOTE	CD 6079
RIF	CD 6056
CITIES & STREETS	CD 6082
CODE (new release)	CD 6084
STEVE LACY & MAARTEN ALTENA	
HIGH, LOW AND ORDER	CD 6060



The production has been made possible by generous financial assistance of various Dutch corporations. Photo: Perceptual. The Day Records LTD. NEW Turner-Deine Band

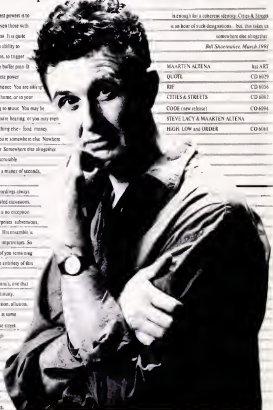


Photo: David Baines

THIS JANUARY, the London Musicians Collective splashed out in style. Named after a utopian city-state founded after WWI by the poet D'Annunzio, *Fiume* was a performance jambooree held in steam-bath conditions at the University of London swimming pool. Playing to some 300 punters crammed precariously round the poolside, *Fiume* was a collection of turns that exploited the water to a greater or lesser degree — shining lights to catch ripples off the surface, playing with the swimminess of the acoustic, or simply taking the chance to strip down to speedos and do a leisurely length or two. It was something between an art installation and a sauna — open night at the dolphinarium or an invocation of the demon Esther Williams.

For anyone associated who associated the LMC with austere improvisation in austere settings, it was an eye-opener: Lol Coxhill suspended in the shallows, raincoat flailing, and trying to coast a sound out of a multi-pronged aquahorn (to no avail); Vanessa Mackness and Phil Minton bellowing porpoise love calls the length and breadth of the pool; a performance troupe running up the sides whistling and hissing, providing middling entertainment value but sterling research-and-development for future stagings of *The Tempest*. Anyone whose sweat glands survived the night will tell you it was a choppy event but well worth navigating through.

Fiume was something of a sideshow, closer to the lush



Jak Kilby

... IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWIM!
... IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWIM!

shores of performance art or to the madcap diversions of late 60s happenings than to the enclosed cabals that spring to mind when you think of the LMC. On one level, it was a flashy way to woo crowds and publicity to a newly-revived LMC, and as such, it worked — when was the last time you saw a photo of Lol Coxhill in the *Sunday Times*, let alone filmed on *Blue Peter*? But on another level, it was a godsend to lovers of metaphor, as tends to happen when you have a lot of water around. It was an occasion for total immersion or for just dipping into the pool (now there's a particularly resonant term in improvising circles), for testing the water or sounding the depths. The word-play is not just sophistry, since *Fiume* was a very tangible illustration of the way that water metaphors — the fluid imaginary — underpin improvising more than any other music: a filled pool presents you with the image of more dimensions, more directions for navigating, than you might have in more *grounded* music. The aquarium feel of free music, the feeling that you're surrounded, is what makes it so scary: the fear of this music felt by novices, myself included, is

For a while it seemed as if the London Musicians Collective only had a Golden Age to look back on. Now it has a future as well, all over the place.
Jonathan Romney
reports from the poolside.

precisely the sense of sink-or-swim that it entails. So *Fiume*, among other things, was extended a pair of water-wings to the neophyte public.

THIS APPEAL to the outside world is characteristic of the LMC's new incarnation. It dares suggest that in the 90s improvised music might actually have an audience, a place in



The LMC of old: David Toop spills improv's central metaphor down his jeans; Evan Parker and Paul Burwell keep their distance.

the market. The LMC in its newsletter now speaks about itself unashamedly as a "shop": "We have repackaged our product (the creative energies of musicians) and it is selling very well." And now that the LMC no longer has the Camden Town warehouse premises it occupied from 1975 to 1988 there's also the more concrete question of the space it can occupy.

I'm talking to Nick Couldry — one of the LMC's current organisers — and to Evan Parker, its *éminence grise* from way back to the LMC's forebear, the Musicians Co-operative of the early 70s. Perhaps appropriately, we're sitting in the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall — a monumental public space that's the antithesis of the makeshift semi-private spaces that the chronically underfunded LMC has always inhabited. A brass band playing tunes from *Oklahoma* offers some sort of ironic counterpoint to our talk.

How, I ask Couldry, do you sell improvisation to people who may be vaguely interested? "It's a question of definition. If you start off by describing it as difficult, then people will find it difficult. If you present it in a different way — describe it as 'experimental' — you can get different reactions. *Frame* was a very experimental bill. We said, this is an evening of exciting music in a different space, and we got a lot of people who were interested in taking the risk and having an exciting Saturday night out."

Improv as a good night out? Traditionally, that's only been imaginable for participating players; for non-initiates, listening to the form have always been on the list of pursuits that were supposedly painful and, therefore, *fully good for you*. There was an element of that in the LMC's old Gloucester Avenue

premises, tucked away in Camden Town's sprawling British Rail outhouse-zone — a warehouse building up a fire escape, *sans* toilets, *sans* bar, *sans* comfy seats, and with the notoriously un-funloving London Film-Makers Co-op as neighbours. The early LMC was a spin-off from the more exclusive Musicians Co-operative with which Parker, Derek Bailey, John Stevens and Paul Rutherford were associated. These were the first-generation British improvisers, who were getting work in Europe and elsewhere. The next generation, who weren't yet, included musicians who have been involved in other forms besides jazz, among them David Toop, Steve Beresford, Paul Burwell, Nigel Coombes, John Russell, and these were some of the people who presided over the LMC's inception.

Typical events in what Parker remembers as the "Golden Age" involved an audience of 10 to 20 people. The musicianly nature of things held sway — as Parker says of that era's open nights, "There was no pressure to generate an audience." But the discomfort of the premises finally led to the LMC to move out in 1988 and to disembodiment itself, basing itself in office space at the Diorama. Full-time administrators were brought in to run things, but the LMC entered a phantom existence. "It was a dark period," Parker remembers. "Nothing really gelled."

Hence, finally, the third stage that the LMC has been in for some six months, restructured and reinvigorated but still without a space of its own. Arguably, this offers the possibility of it being a moveable feast — despite the misgivings of current programmer Ed Baxter. "To my mind it's a disaster not having a central venue. Without a space everything is even more atomised in terms of social structure, things are unfocused. It's self-delusion that you're better off in this free-wheeling nomad style."

ONE OF the virtues of a concrete space, indeed, is that it also becomes a symbolic space ripe for invasion. When it threatens to get hidebound, sanctum-like, there's every chance of its being seen as a bastion ripe for storming. This happened briefly in late 70s when the LMC rubbed shoulders with disaffected punk agitators. Hence Beresford's collaborations with the Slits; stabs at a new breed of post-punk jazz, as represented by the Rip Rag and Panic school; involvement by members of Scritti Politti, who, David Toop remembers, were in it for the possibilities of a theoretical forum: "The music will always be attractive to people interested in anarchist ideas, because of its ostensibly non-hierarchical nature."

But this activity was caught up in a debate about staying in or going out into the world, a debate that, says Toop (now an unaligned observer) still seems to underpin LMC debates. "Some of the arguments I read about now are identical to the ones we used to have — between letting the music develop in relative purity outside the demands of the market, and on the

a brief history

OF T R O U B L E M A K I N G

**For the last 100 years,
from Erik Satie to Fabulous,
some musicians have made
a point of behaving badly.**

**Mark Sinker
only wants to encourage them.**



YVES KLEIN saut dans le vide: Yves Klein leaps into space. Did it happen, or is the famous 1960 picture of the infamous neo-Dadaist smiling so wildly, so privately, faked — as he hurls himself from a high window out above the pavement of a quiet suburban Paris street?

And more important, does it matter? Isn't what matters, when you're making trouble, that into the heads of the onlooking crowd the idea is put that it *could* happen? And if so, what then?

Klein was a conceptual artist (in the 50s, decades before there was any Conceptual Art). What he did — absurdist mind-gags questioning the value and purpose of art — was never really *music*, by any ordinary usage of that word.

But what are the limits of music? Consider LaMonte Young, ex-jazzman, mentor to John Cale and other early Velvet Undergrounders, mystic minimalist pioneering extremes of monotony, volume and duration (Lou Reed's notorious "joke" record *Metal Machine Music* is a logical extension of Young's work — Reed who used often to say that he wanted to do for rock what Ornette had done for jazz). In the late 50s, with New York beginning to bubble very weirdly (avant garde cinema, Happenings, early Pop Art), Young was stuffing violins full of concert programmes and burning them on-stage. Was this music? There's his butterfly piece: a butterfly is released into an auditorium, the piece being its flight, ending when it exits the room. Is this?

And then there's *Composition 1960 #3*: "Announce to the audience when the piece will begin and end, if there is a limit on duration. It may be of any duration. Then announce that everyone may do whatever he wishes for the duration of the



Yves Klein saut dans le vide (detail).

Harry Shunk

composition." If music can include this, anything Klein commits gets in!

Young was an enthusiastic and inventive member of Fluxus, George Maciunas' guerrilla-art group — Allan Kaprow, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Jackson Mac Low, Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono — that convened in Yoko's loft: art, they were insisting, is life, and life is art: art — including music — is anything *anyone* does. Result: irritation, confusion, confrontation, the ending, by any means necessary, of the commodification that had ruined art: the transformation, similarly, of an audience's settled assumptions about where performance ended and reality began. *Marc Of The Mind*, Yoko came to call it. A perilous area: it got her husband killed.

"Infamy, infamy, they've all got it in for me"

— Kenneth Williams as Julius Caesar

"We're the young generation, and we've got something to say"

— The Monkees

NAM JUNE Paik, watched by an audience which includes Stockhausen and John Cage, is scrambling around inside a violated piano. Suddenly he leaps up, runs right up to Cage, and starts cutting holes in his shirt with a pair of very sharp, evil-looking scissors. He snips off Cage's tie and pours shampoo over his head, then scrambles through the stunned crowd out of the room. A phone rings — when it's at last answered, it's Paik, announcing the end of the piece.

If Cage was at all unnerved by such fond attentions, he only had himself to blame; he'd been the first composer to foreground this tradition of zen theatre. Less violently, to be sure: in *One For Violin* Paik would hold one in his outstretched arms and raise it above his head, slowly, slowly, slowly — then with tremendous force smash it to pieces on the table in front of him; while his *Omnage A John Cage* consisted of an upright piano being tipped over (he was known, for a while, as the "world's most famous bad pianist"). As well as *Imaginary Landscapes* #4 (for 12 randomly tuned radios), and the introduction of various levels of chance operation to throw performers out of habitual thinking, Cage had written the epochal 4'33", in which the silence, and thus the natural sounds outside the concert hall (as well as the unhappy shuffling and muttering within it), became part of the music. Cage had turned the boundaries of music inside out. If there was any violence, it was directed at him.

Long before, the original Dadaists had babbled idiot-poetry over bogus "Negro" rhythms: *oumbah oumbah*. The Futurists had assaulted the whole decadent orchestral tradition with their uncompromising noise-machines. The tiresome George Antheil had scored his *Ballet Mécanique* for aircraft engines. And the ineffable turn-of-the-century prankster Erik Satie, whose eccentric and unplaceable ghost haunts a century of anti-art activity, had upended all proprieties of authorship and meaning with his Furniture Music. He once staged a ballet, *Relâche*, in which the dancers chainsmoked and all costume changes took place onstage. For the curtain-call, Satie himself appeared, waving ironically in the uproar, at the wheel of a misdeed five-horsepower Citroën.

Cage himself — Schönberg's pupil, but surely Satie's truest follower — discovered the score of Satie's *Vexations*, a short series of chords to be played 840 times (it takes a day and a half). Paik, who late in the 60s wrote a symphony to "last a million years", and often worked with Charlotte Moorman, a demure classical cellist whose semidull performances caused frantic excitement in the mid-60s, took Satie's ideas about shock and conceptual wiring to their reasonable limits; but — even though Moorman's play with sexual energy behind all performance very nearly got her jailed — they were riding a general wave of change. Satie had been on his own.

"SOMETIMES," SAYS James Brown, former NME features editor and — many would say — world-class obnoxious tick, presently conceptual strategist to the group Fabulous, "Sometimes you go to places, you've pulled 200 people, you do a good gig, they all like it, they come backstage and invite you to parties, it's all a bit run of the mill. The best concerts for us are when you go and play to a thousand people, and you ruin their evening! And a hundred of them are going to come back and have it ruined again!"

Fabulous are a young, ambitious, snarling, flamboyantly deviant little guitar band, for the moment unsigned. They're hardly a year old, and nowhere much yet beyond a series of riotous gigs a single no one seems to have bought or heard and obtuse coverage, for and against. But they're utterly convinced that it's their destiny to put the "danger" back into rock to be the world's most famous bad guitar band. Inevitably, the talk turns to Punk Rock: I'm trying to convince them — and maybe myself — that Punk passed the load, loutish kids by, that the first people it spoke to were the quiet ones, the odd ones:

"I don't care about Punk Rock," says Brown airily. "You had a much better point when you were talking about the Dadaists."

Rebel Rock is nothing new, of course. All the way from Jerry Lee Lewis to The Manic Street Preachers — via the Stones, Zeppelin, the New York Dolls, the Pistols, the Slics, the Jesus and Mary Chain, the Beastie Boys, Guns N' Roses — angry young men have been behaving badly: causing trouble's been a way of goosing up the industry, instant gratification always a priority, long-term development laughed at, decline towards worthless griping industry-nurtured bigotry inevitable. Helen Little once wrote a piece for *Monitor*, about a Jamie Reid art show, pointing out that someone would always be cleaning up after the shocking spree was done, after all the food was thrown. Who? Women. Some revolution this is, and all to "rescue" something that, rescued, would merely continue to manipulate and exploit. "No fresh air at all," she wrote, bitterly: when destruction's celebrated, can misogyny be far behind?

"We have condoms on the contract rider," Brown tells me cheerfully. "For simple practical reasons. Our riders are quite specific. Rather than endless beer, we have cold quires, stuff we're actually going to need on the road. We don't stay in hotels — I've told the guys if they're not good enough to cop off, or to get invited back by whoever, then they're not good enough to be in a band." Fabulous are outspokenly bisexual — as courageous as it's smart publicity — and I'm not so wedded to the straight-edge punk puritanism I came up on (it was largely hypocritical anyway) that I can't accept such a pragmatic approach to one of the motor-force facts of Pop music: that

Making Trouble

oldest of Jazz-jives, the promise of endless, boundless sex.

Charlotte Moorman strayed at arm's length from her audiences, and anyway gave up toplessness as soon as avant gardism began to be a code word for softcore art-porn. Pop makes different demands and has different resolutions for the performer/audience, art/life split. The singer gets to have sex, real or imagined, with his/her audience, even when — think of Iggy Pop before he was fashionable — he's making the most radical demands on the cosy audience-performer relationship. The Fabulous show I saw was chaotic, funny, scary, a little weird round the edges — they *can* stir up passions unavailable to their contemporaries. How far they can take this remains to be seen: the curious — and sceptics — should check out their *Exhibition Of Degenerate Art* tour next month. The real test will always be how they respond to the demands a much wider public makes on them.

Rock, wrote Richard Meltzer — no mean prankster himself, sometime buddy to Fluxusfolk Kaprow and Higgins (as if that makes a difference) — is "brute actualisation where all earlier art is potential". By "art" he means ungluing art; by "rock" he means the whole thing, not just a few special figures in it. "Earlier art" — Cage and all — only pointed to the end of categories and rules and value: rock's achievement — "awesomeness within the trivial", the fusion of "Muzak with the blues and just about everything else for that matter" — effected them, "bringing with it the consequent death of art forever (until someone forgets)." He wrote this in his seminal, hilarious *Aesthetics Of Rock*, about *Sgt Pepper*, that vast, fast, global mixed-media pop-art happening. He saw rock as one huge, brilliant Fluxusform gag, even if anything merely in it was no more than a possibly redundant part of a whole: who cared — as Fluxus has always argued — about who intended what? Does it matter if he was right, or just that rock was the music that first made you think such a thing could maybe one day exist, or ought to? We're back at Yves Klein again.

Aware of the cliché of pop as a religion of self-indulgent emollient, with extremism as one more crowd-pleasing flavour, Fabulous are still a little in love with it: they know they have to flip up out of it, but only half want to. Simon Dudfield, singer, sex-object, former *NME* journalist, refuses to be classed with such shock-tactic fringe-warriors as Psychic TV; he says that's the easy route. Fabulous want, Brown and Dudfield both insist, to take the challenges, the serious intellectual interaction, the creative stimulation, to the largest possible audience.

All the same, beyond the spectacle of the five of them having public, wild fun, it's never entirely clear what the specific challenges might be, beyond a refusal of fear or routine. They love the idea of *A Brief History Of Troublemaking*, but they're hardly clear on possible reasons they should be in

it. Brown, no longer acting brat-with-chip (at least not with me) wants to be Andrew Loog Oldham, Malcolm McLaren and Paul Morley combined, a rogue ideas man; he enthuses about what he describes as the "old-age pranksters", the KLF, the Pet Shop Boys, Right Said Fred, all *fortysomethings* without illusions about limits, subverting the industry from within. He likes the idea of ideas, even though most of the gags Fabulous have been celebrated for so far (theft, vandalism, debauchery) don't focus or upend audience expectations so much as entrench them. The idea I liked best was having the group give talks on what they're doing — in Humanities classes — to schoolkids. Working for the community, they called it.

Their kandy-coloured Fabulous kar has "Arrest Me" daubed in large letters on the back. Their role models — they say — are people like Alex Higgins, people whose career self-destructiveness is precisely what makes them so compelling. They want to be that kind of front-page news, to bust out of music's parochialism and affect everyone. One plan: to bulldoze Sony Headquarters in Soho Square, get sent down, release the single from prison, and enter history. The bulldozer — they say — wouldn't turn into the narrow sidestreets off Oxford Street: plan abandoned. But not before they broadcast the *idea*.

"BLOOD PIECE: use your own blood to paint. Keep painting till you faint (A). Keep painting till you die (B)."

— Yoko Ono

JACQUES VACHÉ, the pro-Surrealist committing suicide by opium-OD, administered the same dose to two friends who'd come round to tea, with no intentions whatever of dying. Destruction has charisma, and never more than when it goes hand-in-hand with self-destruction — the negative glamour of the doomed junkie, of Hannibal Lecter, of anyone more able than you or me to throw off the shackles of conventional desire.

Those of us who "want something" — fun, fame, wealth, babes, food, clothing and shelter — can find fear and thrills and an idea of freedom in the idea of those who "want nothing". People who want everything to be different, whatever happens to themselves — an agenda that makes no sense to the comfortable (or the truly dispossessed). Trouble, *real* trouble, *deep* trouble, matters less in its specifics than its ultimate effect: Cage changed things by staying quiet, not making a noise. Lasting trouble — the kind that doesn't necessarily need an underpaid middle-aged woman with a mop and bucket to



Derek Ridgers

Fabulous: business as usual or new lease of life?

clean up after it – is much more to do with leaping into the void than looking to your future. Satie, who could easily have bartered his behaviour into reasonable financial and critical success, simply didn't want this. "The public," he declared in gnomic fashion, "venerates boredom – for boredom is mysterious and profound." This is the void: the self-destructive melancholy, so hard to dispel, behind the riot. This is the act that leaves questions, long after the rumpus is over.

The "alternative" within the mainstream – art-strokes for art-folks, backwoods dissent of every hue – may well be corrupted beyond speedy salvage. All fringe activities in the niche-marketed 80s have become quiet little mini-mainstreams, all possible danger parcelled carefully out between them and kept separate, like pieces of the geni's broken ring. The only troublemakers left to the present are those figures so famous they jump above the rules of genre (they're genres in themselves), to toy with the rules of celebrity (Madonna-the-rogue-corporation, for example, stifling Pepsi for billions of dollars of product endorsement by being suddenly, casually blasphemous: suddenly Pepsi didn't fancy the endorsement after all).

They make music and associated behaviour a means to fame, and fame as the raw material of the next art-play. Madonna, having fun and being Bi; Fabulous, having fun and being Bi; Lennon/Ono's *Hair Peace/Bed Peace*; turbulence as an end in itself. Is it unreasonable dignifying these kinds of trouble to cite Cage and Paik? Is it really taking C&P seriously if you don't make comparisons like these? *Anything anyone does* . . . The real question is the question of public response. C&P have an easy living, these days, being "unpredictable".

Meltzer long ago decided he was wrong. Because 99% of rock turned out to be as turned in on itself as 99% of everything else. Just like anything else, it makes trouble when it jumps beyond its own self-imposed limits. All Fabulous have proved so far – it's as apparent in friendly as it is in hostile write-ups – is the lameness and lack of imagination of their peers, and of the media channels directly plugged into pop culture. Media is too cynical, too knowing, too passive to act as anything but a baffle-screen to the imagination; faced with this it's a positive advantage to be young and unaware of history and its failures – to be arrogant and difficult and implacable. To be a little stupid, to lack foresight.

Music is about finding or creating community, through ritual dialogues of pleasure, through shared tolerance of repeated things, through acceptance of things as they are: it's never been hard to shake that up, to cause ripples. You could do it at the QEH or Ronnie's tonight. The problem is how to keep the ripples going without them becoming the new status quo. That's when "wanting something" isn't enough – that's when "wanting nothing" begins again to whisper. ■

there's there's BOOMS, BUSTS & there's BHEKI

Without the help of the mainstream Jazz industry, Bheki Mseleku has finally made his mark as a significant player. John Fordham celebrates his talent, and wonders what's gone wrong with a British Jazz scene that nearly missed him. Picture: Dominic Turner

THEY SAY that if you mention the name of Bheki Mseleku on the South African jazz scene, musicians turn their heads at once. He's widely regarded as the most seriously gifted, technically commanding and emotionally complete musician to have emerged from that tortured place since the arrival of Abdullah Ibrahim as Dollar Brand. Like many of the musicians he grew up with, Mseleku is an exile, though the opportunity to return to the Cape with redoubled musical and spiritual strengths (word about his performances has spread, and post-bop stars like Marvin 'Smitty' Smith now offer their services) has come closer. But if 1992 is the year Bheki Mseleku takes off as an international jazz star, and it's likely, then it's been a long wait for him and his family, friends and fans.

Back in April 1987, when Ronnie Scott put him, recently arrived, into the club opposite headliner Stan Tracey it was clear within a song or two that the distance between Mseleku's inspirations and the sound he made was shorter than it is for the average jazz musician who's heard of Bud Powell and McCoy Tyner. Powell was an unexpected echo, but it was there as an atmosphere of commitment and power rather than ripped-off licks, audible in Mseleku's ability to play every note as if he meant it to stick, hitting the keyboard with a conviction that left the nuances of every sound ringing in the air whatever the tempo. The South African also managed to make playing the piano with one hand and keying the saxophone with the other seem not like a sideshow but the obvious and unexceptionable chemistry of the music it released.

Mseleku's career in Britain seemed to bog down, after such a flying start. He appeared on small-scale gigs, did the odd tour, had respect he couldn't live off. Then, last November at the Jazz Cafe, he put together a dream band. "Smitty" Smith, one of the shrewdest and most musical of young polyrhythmic drummers, flew from New York with bassist Michael Bowie to join Mseleku in a series of gigs that also

involved ex Loose Tubes flautist Eddie Parker, and tenorists Jean Toussaint and Steve Williamson. Smith had heard Mseleku at Ronnie's years before, had invited him to jam with the Dave Holland band then in residence. The two men's music fitted together as if they'd been collaborating for years, a piano/percussion conversation as intimate and intense as Bill Evans' with Paul Motian, or Jarrett's with Jack DeJohnette.

THIS MONTH the Jazz Cafe performance can be recalled for those who were there, and invoked for those who weren't, on a remarkable CD the band made in two days flat (all the time they could afford, because the session was cut on a shoestring), a relief to Mseleku admirers and a reproof to a record industry that has dragged its feet over signing him. In the end Nick Gold's World Circuit label took the plunge, and it seems inconceivable on the strength of it that the others won't realise what they've been missing. But Mseleku was overlooked even at the height of the Jazz Boom, and historically the problems are predictable. In earlier years in London, Mseleku felt the full-blown draught of a black exile's difficulties - poverty (no piano, no phone, no transport), problems with papers, racism. Though he was strengthened by the intense spiritual convictions he inherited from a highly influential father, following the example of spiritual masters took him out of the jazz scene for two years (he retired to a temple to meditate at the end of the 80s) a discomfort with practical pressures made him the least likely street-fighter for his particular musical corner. Mseleku avoids inquiries about his musical influences, or political enquiries about South Africa's troubles, maintaining steadfastly that the task for a musician is to be a conduit for musical perfection already existing on other planes, that he isn't a citizen of any country of the world, but rather engaged on a journey of spiritual evolution beyond such things. On top of all these considerations, which might be expected to slow down career moves in an already fraught profession, Mseleku was hard to



categorise with the tools of the time. He wasn't idiosyncratic or wacky like Django Bates, a figurehead for a subculture like Courtney Pine, an eclectician like Andy Sheppard, or an apostle of dance-jazz. He simply played a rigorous music based on bop, modified blues, Latin music and such subtle African inflections that they could be missed on superficial listenings, and did it as well as anybody in the world currently does it.

But Mseleku's supporters (notably childhood friend and tireless activist on his behalf, guitarist Russell Herman), and the man himself, feel that those old entanglements and wrong turnings are evaporating with the enthusiastic endorsement of such heroes of the new American scene as Smith, and a redoubled vigour and creativity that the South African's playing on the CD bears out. Mseleku feels he's embarking on a new stage.

IT'S MSELEKU'S unshakeable conviction that the perfection of a higher plane of existence means that everything he plays exists already, and that his task is to get out of its way. But preparation for this is at least as hard as the task musicians of more pragmatic inclinations meet, in searching for ideal conditions in which to practice and develop.

"Of course, it's difficult to prepare yourself. There's the TV around, all kinds of distractions, and other people do different things. Even most musicians aren't aware of it – well, the only musicians I know of who were deeply into this were Coltrane, and Pharoah and Sun Ra."

Did the world eventually strike him as too crowded and misguided a place to function at all?

"Well, I did find that for a while. After I played at Ronnie Scott's that first time, I found some of the tensions between musicians, and different factions on the scene too hard to deal with. I was trying to bring people together, but there were too many things keeping everything apart. So I stopped playing for two years, and I went to live in a temple with a master. I

was teaching still at the Oval House at the same time to function financially, but I stopped doing gigs. I feel now that I need to be in the world, and I think during that time I may have lost somethings technically, and gained in other spiritual ways. Some masters are very strict, some are not – like Buddha's path is a middle way, you don't have to suppress yourself, you can even do things like smoke if you want. Others are very strict, and would say you shouldn't spend time in places like jazz clubs. So I was being encouraged to stay in the temple but my friends were having a problem with it, and so was my family, people couldn't understand what I was doing. But I hadn't left music behind entirely – I was signing and playing harmonium, but I gained something too, it wasn't a waste."

IT'S BEEN argued that one reason why Mseleku hadn't rung a bell in the minds of promoters or the record industry was that though he was an expatriate South African musician, he didn't do expatriate South African things. There are few obvious references in his music to the kind of repertoire Hugh Masekela has, or Abdullah Ibrahim, or the ferocious chemistry of townships jive, Ellington and free music that the late Chris McGregor and Dudu Pukwana put so ecstatically about. Mseleku sounds *American*, doesn't he?

"Well, if you think in those terms, or think of McCoy Tyner in the same context as me, you should think about the awareness of Africa that some of the Americans have. McCoy played with Johnny Dyani for six months you know, he's very interested in African music and understands it. Pharoah is married to a South African woman. If you want to talk in that language, you can find those connections. But to me there's just life, and it's just music. I'm not nationalistic at all."

Will he go back to South Africa?

"If I'm supposed to go back to South Africa I will. But wherever you are, it's still a matter of letting go. It was

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Bheki Mseleku/British Jazz

particularly hard to do it in that situation of course, where people will just kill you for nothing" (the South African police opened fire on a house in Botswana where Mseleku was expected to play once, and if he'd showed up he would have died along with all the other occupants) "that's a situation that makes it very hard to forgive. But you still have to. If someone has done you wrong, they've done it in ignorance. If they knew about love, they wouldn't have. A lot of these people love their families, and kill other people."

For all that he won't be drawn on how he learned, or how he evolved from what must have been pretty intense studies of the work of McCoy Tyner and other piano gurus, Mseleku's music is a highly virtuosic, complex and structured art for someone seeking evolution to a higher, simpler and more intuitive plane. In the 60s musicians struggled to rid themselves of a lot of the baggage of jazz – Albert Ayler went back to pre-harmony chants and street-music, Ornette Coleman improvised without chords, Coltrane concentrated an impacted form of his immense harmonic vocabulary in soliloquys based on repeated riffs, and at the end of his life was looking for musicians who could say more with less, like Pharoah Sanders. Will his spiritual life lead him there?

"I do feel that if I evolve spiritually the music will have more depth, maybe even from one note, like Pharoah does. And when I was in the temple I played harmonium and did some chanting, which was of course much simpler music. But we don't own influences, or styles of playing, we have to move to a level where we're as open as we can be in this life. I don't know yet what I'll be playing when I get to that point."

RUSSELL HERMAN believes that the west hasn't yet heard a fraction of what Mseleku is capable of, hinting at a yet more personal and original music energised by the acceptance and endorsement that's beginning to come. Mseleku seems on the verge of a breakthrough, down to Herman's ceaseless campaigning as well as his own razor-sharp improvising mind.

But what does a jazz breakthrough (and in an era of blurred generic distinctions, Mseleku is certainly still a jazz player if anybody is) really mean? If the connection with some of New York's hippest musicians takes him out of the usual circuit for gifted British-based players – gigs in Europe, and record deals with a variety of independents – then it might even amount to a trip or two to the States to play some famous boho-bop venues with his American partners, modestly healthy record sales. If Mseleku's self-effacement and sense of duty to a higher reality allows him to speak with a still more personal voice (so that, for instance, we wouldn't keep mentioning names like McCoy Tyner, Bud Powell, or in the writing of some tunes, Chick Corea) he might even build a reputation and a life in the States the way Abdullah and Masikela did. Masikela's example is a pertinent one. Two Englishmen – John Dankworth and the churchman Trevor Huddleston – spotted the trumpeter's talent and even engineered his entry to Britain, but it was in the States that he flowered.


Though this is an enduring local problem, Mseleku's embodiment of it has been partly his own choice. During the "jazz boom" years of the late 80s, when several record companies were looking for "niche" artists to slipstream Antilles' signing of Courtney Pine (who repaid the investment with 70,000 sales of his debut album in its first year) and Andy Sheppard, Mseleku was sitting in a temple with a harmonium. But he was also already in his middle thirties, different, doubtful of commerce, without an obviously "African" repertoire, and thus less easy to image-build in the way that more worldly jazz talents like Tommy Smith, Andy Sheppard or Steve Williamson were. What appealed to record companies about those three, and a few others, was that they were young jazz players who exhibited the kind of hip eclecticism that might open up an audience beyond orthodox jazz fans.

But for the neglected and for the chosen alike, 1992 hasn't looked good. Jazz Boom stories were turning into Jazz Bust stories this winter, as *Jazz FM* virtually abandoned the music it was named after, as the *Jazz Cafe* went into receivership, as the recession threatened to reverse the record companies' monetary largesse on new artists and divert investment for the future towards repackaging archive material on CD (which is cheaper).

It became clearer than ever that British neglect of jazz creativity was the result of a cultural vacuum for comprehending the *attitude* that makes jazz, which couldn't be filled simply by a couple of years of labelling cars and perfumes with the name. The edging of jazz and improvisation studies into education's National Curriculum and a slowly-growing place for alternatives to high-bourgeois art music in public subsidy budgets is at last suggesting that one day the music industry might recruit from candidates who can tell a good musician by ear rather than by reputation, education or their fashion sense. Nobody but the profoundly pessimistic would contend this isn't a kind of progress. But it's such deep-rooted institutional and cultural change that truly alter things, not a marketing-department "jazz boom", particularly one that seems to insist its beneficiaries are the first good jazz players the country's ever known when a previous generation that included John McLaughlin, John Surman, Alan Skidmore, Mike Westbrook, Evan Parker, Keith Tippett, Dave Holland, Tony Oxley and others so clearly disproves this. To survive, these players have emigrated, or else spent their lives on the road in Europe, their best recording hope being a signing to a sensitive foreign independent like ECM.

Bheki Mseleku has been ready as a musician since he came here. Now he's ready as a performer and a professional, with invaluable endorsements from some of the world's most forceful and charismatic musicians; inevitably, a ripple will find its way back to the record and promoting business. If Russell Herman's right, and the best is yet to come, and if Mseleku is serious that his place is now "in the world", there's a lot of music on the way. It's about time. ■

IN SENSURROUND SOUND?



Once upon a time Ambient Music was the misunderstood pipedream of the avant garde's wildest thinkers. David Toop takes a look at what it grew up into.

"What is happening is a synthesis of the music and sound we normally hear in snatches: the elevator ride's worth of Mozart, the passing conversation, and the automobile argument all mingle freely with Beethoven and the Balinese Gender Wayang." (from notes by Joseph Byrd to the Everest recording of Cage's Variations IV)

A Pre-Ambient Eno mixes up the future

MARCH/APRIL, 1992: Renaar Vandepapeliere, owner of R&S Records – Belgium's leading techno label and the outlet for "Dominator" by Human Resource, C.J. Bolland's "Ravesignals", Frank De Wulf's "b Sides", The Aphex Twin's "Digeridoo" and Joey Beltram's "Energy Flash" – plans a new label for the release of ambient music. "Ambient will survive," he says, "because it's much more relaxed. People, they live faster. Even kids that go out to clubs, probably they will listen to something to chill out and go to bed." Going for the headtrip/spaceship imagery that's always pervaded the genre, his choice of name for this venture is Apollo.

In 1975 I was invited by Brian Eno to play guitar in a session that would also include (as I recall) Phil Manzanera and Robert Wyatt. The night before the session, Eno was knocked down by a car and badly injured. I visited him at his flat in Maida Vale and found him lying in bed. Milk had been spilled on the carpet and, since he was too ill to clear it up, a sour smell was building in the room. Similarly, the portable TV at the end of the bed was badly tuned but the picture was left to jump and blur.

Out of this condition of enforced stasis came Brian's famous discovery of threshold hearing. He told me that he had put a record of harp music on the turntable. Back in bed, he found the music was almost inaudible but too much effort was

needed to go back to the amplifier to raise the volume. Incapable of making normative adjustments to his environment, he found himself drifting in and out of the music, using it as a peripheral mood additive.

Following this experience, he began to write about the possibilities of using music "to 'tint' the environment" or "to modify our moods in almost subliminal ways." These were ideas floating in the collective unconscious of the time. Philip K. Dick had touched upon the notion of true mood music (altered states) in his 1972 novel, *We Can Build You*. "Like most people," says the narrator of the story, "I've dabbled at the keys of a Hammerstein Mood Organ, and I enjoy it. But there's nothing creative about it. True, you can hit on new configurations of brain stimulation, and hence produce entirely new emotions in your head which would never otherwise show up there. You might – theoretically – even hit on the combination that will put you in the state of nirvana. . . . But that's not music. That's escape. Who wants it?"

"I want it," another character replied, speaking prophetically for one of the dominant moods of the 1990s. As we now know, Eno's proposal – that one emergent form of listening behaviour was turning music into a functional and mildly psychotropic muzak – was transformed, both by the market and by the sheep-like tendencies within the avant-garde, into



something far less radical. Threshold listening behaviour was converted into a compositional method and by the end of the 1970s, so-called Ambient Music (ie. electronic, oceanic, not-much-happening drones) had become one of the standard styles of avant-rock and post-minimalist compositions. In our present, these drones are everywhere. It's a huge, ever growing, pulsating, womb-adjelic, screamedelic, homodelphinus, ambient, floating, chill-out ultraworld.

... at a deeper level his attention to the upper and lower fringes of audibility suggests a further interest in exploring the two fundamental frequency areas of human consciousness: the buzz of the nervous system and the thump of the heart. Telemusik's peculiar stratification of low-frequency beats, middle-frequency speech patterns and high-frequency intermodulation anticipates Hymnen's adventures in memory and perceptual assimilation, and gives effective expression to the composer's frequently drawn parallel between 'stream-of-consciousness' mental processes and radio reception." (from *The Works of Stockhausen*, Robin Maconie, 1976)

SO WHAT is ambient music and why does it invariably sound like a fish pump in a forest? After all, ambient means surrounding. The term should suggest envelopment, atmosphere, totality, embrace, dissolution. Eno albums such as *Music For Airports* maintained their integrity to the initial premise. They aspired to the functional invisibility of Erik Satie's 'furniture music', but they also belonged to the drone music tradition of LaMonte Young. Imitators ignored the utilitarian role of *Music For Airports*, which reduced, to some extent, the privileged status of both composer and music; instead, they reified and commodified the drone into a sculptural object. They put the music back into the foreground.

LaMonte Young had recorded ambient pieces such as "Drift Study 31 1 69" (*Aspen Magazine*, No. 8) and "Drift Study 14 VII 73 9 : 27 : 27-10 : 06 41 PM NYC" (Shandar Records) in the late 60s and early 70s. These were sine-wave intervals which, because of the variable air pressure spots in an enclosed space, seemed to fluctuate as listeners moved around the room in which they were playing. As Young wrote, this elevated the listener's relationship to the music by making "position and movement in the space an integral part of the sound composition." Again, the idea of installation music, responsive to involuntary human participation, was floating in the conceptual pool of the era.

In a story from 1971, *The Singing Statues*, J.G. Ballard invented a trade in semi-organic neurophonic sonic sculptures, some of them genuinely interactive and some of them fakes, which used concealed pre-recorded tapes to simulate an ambient capability. "I went out one dusk to the sand reefs where the sonic sculptures grow," says one passage. "As I approached, they were creaking in the wind wherever the thermal gradients cut through them. I walked up the long slopes, listening to them mewl and whine, searching for one that would serve as the sonic core for a new statue."

"In Outer Space you can't take your drums — you take your mind." (Arthur Russell, cellist, vocalist and percussionist on "Let's Go Swimming", *World of Echo* and Indian Ocean's "Treehouse/School Bell", interviewed in 1987)

WITH ITS mystical component, the music of minimalist pioneers such as LaMonte Young and Terry Riley has filtered through as a distant, clandestine influence (via *Tangerine Dream*) on the drone sector of New Age music. The meditation-aid functionalism and Arcadian landscapes of New Age have contributed to the narrowing parameters of Ambient music, but the aims of New Age — the evolution of self and society — overlap onto the psychoactive intentions of much drug related (post-acid) techno and its inner space associate, the chill-out room.

The re-affirmed association of dance music with transcendence and drugs that came at the end of the 80s opened a window onto new possibilities of brain-food muzak. Inspired by the music he knew from his music publishing job at EG Records (originally the home of Brian Eno, Jon Hassell, Harold Budd and the Obscure label), as well as the drum-less radio tapes that he heard in Chicago when visiting Larry "Mr. Fingers" Heard to discuss a publishing deal, Alex "The Orb" Patterson pioneered the live chill-out mix — the bath/womb/Virtual World of birdsong, drones and samples that promised (though unsurprisingly, considering the fitful, market-oriented context, only sporadically delivered) a radical breakdown of musical structure into shifting, environmental overlays.

There are amusing parallels between chill-out rooms and John Cage's *Variations IV*, with its indigestible barrage of environmental noise recorded for the 1969 record release at an art gallery on La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles. The spoken introduction to the album advises us to "Listen closely and you will hear the sounds of the audiences as well as the tinkle of the glasses as the mike over the bar was in use. Records and previous recorded tapes, as well as radio broadcasts, are mixed in during the concert."

Far from sharing Cage's blithe embrace of random noise, clutter and fragmentation, current Ambient music has a cooling, calming purpose which can only be served by constraining the outside influences, reducing the imagery and implications, resisting breakdown and inopportune interventions, sealing off from the world in a zipped-down OM-zone.

The irony of this new category of Ambient Music is that all music reeters on the edge of demotion to ambience, due to the pervasive influence of MTV-type lifestyle programming, the spread of music as advertising soundtrack, the absorption of music into an interwoven, stream-of-(un)consciousness network of communications. While we drift in the mindscapes of The Orb, Marathon, Primal Scream, Spiritualized, Sun Electric, Orbital and The Grid — merging music and world-sounds into the void, circling Spacehip Earth in the Apollo — the real decomposition threatening to eat into music's bones comes from the satellite visionaries of marketing and media corporations. Did we chill out or did we fall asleep? ■

Chris Parker squares his eyes up to the most recent batch of videos.

Step Across The Border

FRED FRITH

(Rev Rev Music ReVCo 30)

THE BARE facts about this project are easily conveyed. Film-makers Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel have followed guitarist and performance artist *extraordinaire* Fred Frith on his travels to Japan, Italy, France, the DDR, London, Yorkshire, New York and Switzerland and shuffled the resulting film into a "90-minute celluloid improvisation". Featured artists include Joey Baron, Iva Bittova, Arto Lindsay and John Zorn, and there is a good deal of philosophising on trains and in dinets, much rehearsal and bandroom banter, the odd "finished" performance and lots of "incidental" material like people sleeping on Japanese underground trains and walking moodily through rainswept New York streets.

Less easily explained (and the inverted commas around "finished" and "incidental" are clues to this difficulty) is the slow, cumulative impression of the improviser's mind and attitude conveyed by the film. Luckily, an early interviewee, with a parable concerning the movement of a butterfly's wing in China and the small but perceptible worldwide repercussions of this apparently insignificant event, puts the film in perspective from the beginning by thus pointing out the relevance and interconnectedness of tiny and seemingly arbitrary and meaningless events. Thus, disparate and heterogeneous strands composed of events like gravel being raked, a baby playing the xylophone, Frith humming to himself as he drives, are woven into the fabric: both of the film and Frith's are simply by his adopting the attitude that all this experience is grist to his mill.

Certainly, in his direct attempts at self-expression, musical and verbal, Frith is a compelling and eloquent performer, whether he's explaining just why the blues is important to him, conducting one of his eccentric but wholly convincing pieces of music, or simply playing his guitar. A must for all Frith admirers, and surprisingly convincing for the more sceptical.



Hans Bennink at work.

Solo 7

HANS BENNINK

(ICP 027)

AFICONADOS OF the great Dutch drummer will not be surprised to learn that this half-hour solo improvisation, recorded at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, involves not only the conventional kit but a fishing rod, two model woodpeckers and a soprano saxophone. The kit is attacked with the customary Bennink exuberance and eccentricity (feet being brought into play on the skins, percussive effects interspersed with

whistles etc); the fishing rod guides a hanging drumstick continuously around an aural assault course composed of a miscellany of noise-making objects; the model woodpeckers provide a woodblock-like counterpoint to Bennink's impassioned soprano work. Throughout all this, the camera prowls around the soloist, dispassionately observing him while he throws a towel over his head, slides around the floor with a box on his foot, or operates his woodpeckers electronically. For those who like their performances eccentric, unpredictable and laced with deadpan humour.

Early Duke Ellington On Films

(Milan Home Video MV 0062)

THE NEAR-20-year span covered by the various films in this compilation (1933-50) makes for some interesting comparisons. In the 1930s material, "A Bundle Of Blues" and "Symphony In Black - A Rhapsody Of Negro Life", the music - "Stormy Weather", "Bugle Call Rag", "Ducky Wucky" and Billie Holiday's "Saddest Tale" etc - cannot be said to constitute the film-makers' main focus of interest. Thus, Billie Holiday's first film appearance is notable rather for its stereotypical portrayal of a black-woman-as-victim and her male counterpart as deceitful, violent and callous, than for a unique chance to hear the music's greatest singer fronting the music's great orchestra. Similarly, a spirited soundie rendition of "C Jam Blues" featuring Rex Stewart, Joe Nanton, Ben

Webster and Barney Bigard never quite lives up to its musical promise because its "dramatic" setting and incidental characters are fatally distracting.

By 1950, however, both Will Cowan's "Salute To Duke Ellington" and the Snader Descriptions have the good sense and respect to allow the orchestra's music and its leader to speak for themselves, so there are no distractions from Chubby Kemp singing a blues, or such Ducl staples as "Take The 'A' Train", "Solitude", "Sophisticated Lady" and "Mood Indigo". The problem is that whereas the 1930s orchestra was a unique and innovative unit, which would have shone unforgettably in such an unwavering spotlight, the 1950s version, though still a great band, simply does not convey the thrilling "shock of the new" of its predecessor.

This is not to say that there is substantially

less pleasure to be derived from viewing the 1950s material; particularly fascinating is the much-noted contrast between drummers Louie Bellson and Sonny Greer, usually (see Collier, for instance) found to favour the former. I personally find Bellson a little overpowering, too aggressive, preferring the wider and more subtle textural range of Greer; he certainly doesn't spark the band like Bellson, but I'm not sure I want my Ellington sparked. And there are, of course, still the great figures: Johnny Hodges and Lawrence Brown (in "Salute" only, before their defection), Harry Carney and Paul Gonzales, the latter shortly to revitalise interest in the band at 1956's Newport Festival.

Recommended - but don't go thinking Billie Holiday's prominent baling on the cover is justified by her blink-and-you-miss-it appearance.

HIPHOPRISY continued from page 21

a complex aesthetic, an endeavour made more viable when you live, as he does, on such a busy street.

But, in defining the area he wants Hiphoprism to work in, reaching indeed for a *What's Going On* of the 90s - "There is no music that more successfully intertwines the personal and political; Gaye convinces on two levels, the words are apt, while the mood is created perfectly by the music" - Franti admits to dissatisfaction with current HipHop protocols and norms.

This is more than the frustration of any thoughtful musicians with limits of a marketable genre. For Franti, HipHop's development and how it is sold are bound up with black stereotyping, in a way that complements the notorious black types of American cinema. "We learn to laugh to avoid being angry/We learn to flaunt when we get an erection," he sings in "Famous And Dandy".

He is reluctant to condemn without qualification those who, in song, he calls, "brand name negroes". "It's too easy," he explains, "to say 'They're just being small minded and inspired by greed.' You have to look at the dynamics behind culture. If you live in an area where there is 50% unemployment, you might well sing if you're getting paid."

But he is convinced that it is time for the music to move on. "I have respect", he says, "for that generation of New York rappers of the early 80s, but HipHop should not be preservationist. Much fashionable rap has just become short-sighted, a mindless chanting of slogans, with guns." Which, of course, will be lapped up by the record companies, as long as it is profitable. Tse (as arm-waving record exec): "Yeah, give us more guns on the street, party, fondle girls."

"You could compare the development of rap," continues

Franti, "to what happened in jazz or rock. You start off with Little Richard or Chuck Berry, and rock ends up splintering into metal and punk and whatever." He expands: any group when it first finds a voice will stake out a territory, introduce itself, and may appear uniform and one-dimensional. "Now it's time to look to ourselves, examine our own motives, to look inward and give a whole picture."

CHUCK D of Public Enemy has spoken of the need for the black community to present a united front, at least until social imbalances, as he sees them, are corrected. HipHop's place in this credo is as a voice of strength and resistance. "Weak" inward looking is discouraged. "Too much truth in introspection/Maintain the regimentation", sings Franti, in what could be an ironic response. Franti, however, doesn't finger anyone in particular, and he avows a great respect for PE.

Finding a cattier for this "whole picture" was straightforward. Only Island was sent a tape, on account, explains Franti, of its record of promoting the innovative. The company did not interfere, although this, laughs Franti, might have been due to a high turnover of A&R men. With a different one every week, it seemed the band was left to do its own thing in San Francisco. "It's the ideal, to produce just what you want, and have access to a big company to sell it", he says. "But if people ask us to change, we'll just put our stuff ourselves."

"You know", flips Franti, "I have this four-year-old kid, and imagine if we were to conform to a model. In a few years time he'll want to know why I was away for a month in Europe. I can't seriously tell him I was just holding my dick and sneaking women... can I?" ■

the charts Every month we tabulate all that heaven and chaos allow.
We welcome your contributions.

David J. Batten's Cartoon Tunes Of These And Other Dimensions

1. Music From Warner Brothers Cartoons

The Carl Stalling Project

2. Metropolis *Wilson Breaker Kollektuf*

3. Orchestral Favourites/LSO/The Grand Wazoo

Frank Zappa

4. Four Symphonic Works *Duke Ellington*

5. Balkanology *Ivo Papasov*

6. Beauty Based On Science *Microscopic Septet*

7. Penguin Cafe Orchestra *Penguin Cafe Orchestra*

8. The Great Pretender *Lester Bowie*

9. Easily Slip Into Another World *Henry Threadgill*

10. My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts *David Byrne/Brian Eno*

Frame-by-frame by reader David J. Batten of San Francisco, California

Whitney Lowe's "Nature Now" Playlist

1. It's After The End Of The World *San Ra*

2. The Garden *Simon Fisher Turner*

3. The Four Horses/Apocalypse de *Jean Pierre Heurt*

4. Wilderness *Joy Division*

5. Rain Without Clouds *Crispy Ambulance*

6. Night Of Electric Insects *George Cramb*

7. Gaia *Marilyn Crispell*

8. Meddle-A-Beadle *The Lowest Note On The Organ*

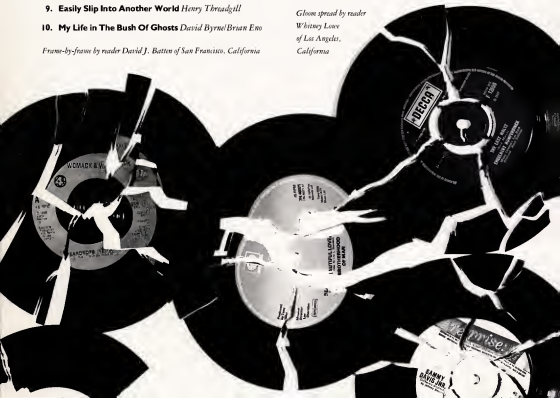
9. Lust *Brecht/Weill*

10. Alchemie 1961 *Jan Boerman*

11. Rumbling *Globe Unity Orchestra*

12. Angels, Men and Mountains *Carl Roggels*

*Gloom spread by reader
Whitney Lowe
of Los Angeles,
California*





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52 THE WIRE

In this month's **SOUNDCHECK:**

Round the roses and through the mire with Marcus Roberts, Cabaret Voltaire, Paul Hindemith, Acker Bilk, Gods of Grind, John Zorn and . . . Splasc(b)!



Mr Fantastic, The Human Torch, Invisible Girl and The Thing: the Kronos Quartet ponder life in the post-crisis universe.

wire winner: dad's of trad

ACKER BILK & HUMPHREY
LYTTELTON

*

At Sundown

Gilgiberg CIGCD 27 CD

I LOVE IT. I can't help it. There's no problem about honouring Humph, who's stuck by a personalised kind of traditional-mainstream for a formidably long career. With Acker, it's a little harder to warm up to a musician whose work seems to have been arbitrarily divided between creative playing and shameless commerce. But this meeting – for the first time on record! – does both men a service. Lyttelton's made a lot of records in recent years, most of them worth hearing, some outstanding, and a careful variation in pace and material has sustained his output. Bilk's appearance, though, is restorative. The tone still has that squawky subtext which has ruined many a trad clarinetist, and his singing – well, I don't mind his singing, but I'd rather hear his clarinet. Otherwise, he's becoming as singular as Pee Wee Russell, and frequently as creative.

Humph plays some clarinet, too, on a couple of tracks, and they run amiable rings round each other on "Just A Little While To Stay Here". The material is a thoughtful mix of old stuff – "Jazz Me Blues" (solo cheerfully pinched from Bix), Bechet's "Southern Sunset", "I Used To Love You" – and genre originals by Lyttelton. Support from Dave Cliff, Dave Green and Bobby Worth, who basically keep out of the way. If you want a trial track to listen to, ask someone to play you "Wabash Blues". Highly recommended.

RICHARD COOK

wire winner: surf-rock twang

PELL MELL

*

Flow

SST 278 CD

ROCK INSTRUMENTALS recorded in San Francisco in January 1991. Although the tunes were written and arranged by mailing tapes between Seattle, Ellensburg, San Francisco, New Haven and Philadelphia, Pell Mell have found a genuine group sound. They weave iconic moments in rock – Velvet's stum-

ming, Sun-era twangs, Farfisa organ sounds – into a gleaming, suggestive soundtrack.

One is assailed by reminders of the other outfits – The Cramps, early Stones, Jonathan Richman, Captain Beefheart, The Surfaris, PIL, Material – but there is nothing arch about this use of an honourable tradition. Actually, the only band to have explored this area of surfpunk surrealism is The Raybeats, refugees from the original James Chance & The Contortions who provided some of the best New York art-pop of the 80s.

Some people might find the pace too slow, start itching for vocals or more blatant musical prowess. However, as the sleeve-note runs on *It's Only A Movie*: "People say that the rock 'n' roll and soul groups who scream and shout have a monopoly on soul, but they are wrong. The Raybeats say surf has its own soul". Pell Mell pack more musical interest than conventional jazz-meets-rock because they know how to make the relative simplicities of their sounds resonate. They know the meaning of a fuzz guitar.

In its way it's perfect, chugging with the right degree of menace and naivety to generate something warped and strange. Another example of the way SST – the West Coast label founded by Black Flag – keep finding bands that refuse the usual moves. There may be hope yet.

BEN WATSON

wire winner: mean slovenes

LAIBACH

*

Kapital

Mute Strum 82 CD

UNTIL RECENTLY, it was possible to think of Ljubljana's *maudit* sons Laibach as a conceptual gag tailored to the tastes of Western rock critics who felt their irony cells weren't stimulated often enough. Applying hokey *Stavro* and *Drang* tactics to their appropriations of the Beatles, Queen and – *reductio ad absurdum* or what? – Euro-nonentities Opus, Laibach were either flirting irresponsibly with Hitlerian trappings or teasing out the totalitarian pretensions within the rock stance itself. If the latter, it was another case of observers from outside a discourse being best equipped to take the widest, wisest view. Or otherwise, they were simply a grand but amusing aberration, a sort of ideologically-slanted Residents.

Less clearly polemical than previous

works, *Kapital* appears at a time when the very idea of unity – a loaded term in rock, and one they've always tilted at with special attention – has become a grossly joke in Yugoslavia. You'd be inclined, then, to look for some sort of topical comment in the latest work of the mean Slovenes. But it's hard to tell what kind of stance is at work on Laibach's most unashamedly generic hardcore house record yet, a forbidding slab of sampled discord straight out of the catalogues of Front 242 and countrymen Borghesia. It would be naive in the extreme to expect Laibach to submit an unequivocal slice of reportage; *faute* to expect them to comment by omission. So you could take the whirring copter blades (*Apocalypse jazz?*) and furious martial drumming that start this voluminous set as specific echoes of war, or the layered sampled voices ("everlasting in union") as



their commentary on the impossibility of any such union. Or *Kapital* could be as purely irresponsible (as unwilling to respond) as any pop.

Certainly, when Laibach directly address the global State of Things, as on "Wirtschaft Ist Tot" ("Economy Is Dead"), they're little more than portentous. But the title *Kapital* is perhaps less about money than about the myth of a head, a controlling centre. Because in Laibach's case there just isn't one – this is de-centred, acephalous stuff that's as cacophonously scrambled and diffused as Laibach has ever been. The very idea of a centre comes across as an obscure menace, even on one hugely improbable track which is a rap by the sun itself, no less ("*Detente is null . . . Check it out as I burn your skull*"). Germania's torchy lament "Skull Trust" waxes it all up on a note of incongruous Eurovision levity, a sweet little ribbon to

wrap this monument of unholy discord.

JONATHAN ROMNEY

wire winner: zorn

**JOHN ZORN/GEORGE
LEWIS/BILL FRISELL**

More News For Lulu
hat ART CD 6055 CD

WITH ZORN it's easy to be drawn more to the figure as much as the Work itself. New York is a seedbed for such pugacious, prolific – not to say polix – guys (Warhol, Mailer, James Chance – indeed you could argue some kinky Oedipal line between the latter and Zorn), figures whose actual oeuvre sometimes seems less *essential* than their own

as strictly musical blocks/forms. He seeks to (sur)prise from inside the blocked form its original stringency, to return into circulation the zip of repressed vitalities, a screech-night blues.

The Lulu trio is his Well Phrased phase – Zorn as an imp in Blue notation, piercingly, almost mockingly lyrical. *More* is the live and further re-vamp of boss standards by Mobley, Clarke, Dornham *et alia*, a super (bossa) nova lift-off pad for elegant mainstream melancholy. What must be astonishing for anyone anti-Zorn – who thinks he is some kinda designer-jazz anti-Christ – is the exemplary clarity of tone and learned poise on display here: no mere doodler's advocate but a purist sculptor of serial mood benders. *More Lulu* showcases a pared-down version of that boffo honky zonk Zorn transcribed from the outer orbits of Ayler and Dolphy. The Zorn zap effect is calmed here to only the odd volley of shrieking giggles – which funnily enough fit those chosen material like a lover's glove.

Mocking, playful, hysterical... but ultimately, peculiarly *faithful*. Chilly classicism on the outside, seething currents within. Lulu would approve.

IAN PENMAN



vivid presence.

Such figures proffer a crossed-index of the Moment's alignment: they bring together in collision elements that would otherwise dwell far apart, purposefully contaminated genres, werewolf forms to stalk our day-mates. What sustains Zorn – and our interest in him – is the tension between American Conservative (forms of choice) and American Marginal (his Cage-y de-constructive play with them), what seduces is the sheer off-key experimental verve.

Zorn understands jazz not only as a hierarchical history of sounds, but as an iconographic frieze. He uses space as well as he slices time: signatures proliferate. Big City bustle glints off his Loft-y specs, Blues swamp hybrids gurgle in his methodically-mussed tidy mind, and *more* worship rules – as here, in the hatchback to Lulu: these are cult topographies, cultural landscapes as much

sound check

ROBERT ASHLEY
Private Parts (The Record)

Lovely Music LCD 1001 CD

Perfect Lives

Lovely Music LCD 0917-3 CD

WHILE THE stage shows which preceded its screening on Channel 4 were unfocussed and rambling affairs, the brace of recordings which first plotted the course of Ashley's made-for-TV opera remain true to its intended medium and yet still work as records. For all its 20th Century modernist apparel, *Perfect Lives* is a great opera in the great operatic tradition; it tells a story, or rather it spins an elaborate yarn around a plot concerning a bank robbery with a libretto that is as much descriptive as narrative.

Ashley's Midwestern drawl hogs centre stage on both versions: the former a stripped down version of what was to become the opening and closing movements of the opera dating from '77; the latter a later, hi-tech rendition of the whole shooting match made six years later. The mainly spoken libretto is both droll and dreamy – Ashley appeals not

only to your imagination but also your state of mind. A flurry of thoughts, visions, concerns and asides simulates the pattern of daydreaming, of wandering between two different senses of reality; a patter which Blue Gene Tyranny's keyboard improvisations accurately mirror in a fast and smoothly changing flux of styles, moving from barrel-style boogie through diner club muzak, bebop-style figures and jazz-bluebear hybrids to pre-New Age impressionism – imagine John Zorn's music without the brutal juxtapositions and you're getting close.

Making music from the inherent rhythms of speech is hardly new, but Ashley's opera is a pearl of the genre. Exemplary and utterly convincing.

DAVID ILLIC

GARY BARTZ
There Goes The Neighborhood
Candid CDCD79506 CD

It's a nice title, even if Joe Walsh did use it first for an album a decade or so ago. But Seriously, folks, Candid's post-bop-mainstream horn-rhythm series isn't comparable yet to the innovative Hencoff days of 30 years earlier, but it fills a niche nevertheless, and here offers Bartz a chance to try to bring some life to the formula.

The influence of Coltrane is strong. Yes, I know Bartz plays alto but that's where most of it's coming from, particularly on the barnstorming version of "Impressions" (with a "So What" tag) or indeed on his own "Racism", which owes a lot to "Cousin Mary". "On A Misty Night", reworked from the great Tadd Dameron/Coltrane original, is maybe the best track of the lot; Bartz finds some totally original variations here: Kenny Barron's jolly pianisms don't engage with the mordant economy of Dameron's own style, but that's his way and you can't argue with a slick mind. Least convincing is the long and somewhat lumpy version of "Laura"; Bartz is not the world's greatest exponent of a ballad line and seems much happier at faster tempos.

Bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ben Riley make up the numbers: I never liked Riley much in his days with Monk, but here I have to confess he's developed a range and subtlety far beyond that early style.

JACK COOKE

BIGSHOTS
Bigshots
Inco CD08 CD

POW HAS traditionally aspired to the para-

digm of the wall of sound: you could think of improvised music as a tank of sound. The tank effect comes to mind on *Bigfoot*, partly because of the clarity and sheer sensurround presence of the music – recorded last summer by Michael Getz – and partly because the sound leaves you few reference points other than the possibility of engulfing yourself in it. This is rigorously unevocative music, which allows no possibility of thinking of it in visual terms, of saying *this* sounds like *that*, because it refers only to itself. What you get is something like the aquarium effect described by film theorist Michel Chion, who points out that the tangibility of the soundtrack has now become the primary reference point in cinema, with visual stimuli reduced to mere trimming, an aid to orientation.

Strip away evocation, and all you have are the obscure moves performed by this jousting trio comprising Tony Bevan (tenor and soprano sax), Paul Rogers (double bass) and Steve Noble (percussion). The strategies behind it remain hidden, although the synchronisation implies the kind of obscure telepathy it's always tempting to ascribe to improvisers. The general tone is ambient, not in any vaporous New Age sense, just in

terms of that *unround*. It's also music of constant suspense – a continual hovering with intent, giving off a curious feeling from frustration, as if there were a pact between these three guys not to make any decisive moves (which fuels the sense of tied-up aggression in Noble's garage gamelan). There are great moments in it, or rather micro-moments, like a second on "Red 5 Shmney" in which a Noble snare suddenly rolls out of nowhere, or a strange mouse-like waltz on "Ghosting". Coming in bits and scraps (screaks, scrapes, nervy pizzicatos), this is music that militates against eloquence. The tank is full of noises, and inscrutably fascinating they are too.

JONATHAN ROMNEY

CINDY BLACKMAN

Trio Plus Two

Forelance FRL CD 015 CD

DRUMMER Cindy Blackman plus Santi Debriano on bass and Dave Fuczyński on guitar, augmented on three tracks by Greg Osby's alto and by Jerry Gonzalez' congas on one. Fuczyński spends most of his time giggling around New York in the band Screaming Headless Torsos, so you get the

picture. The trio music is an odd mixture of fast polyrhythmic funk, bristling with galloping bass drum figures, slashing, metallic chords and Shantock and Frisell effects, but erupting out of some oddly playful Corea and Scofield-like melodies at times. Blackman is an intense and furiously meticulous drummer, Debriano exhibits a Dave Holland-like clarity and punch, and Greg Osby's solo on the opening track, "Possession", is a little post-bop masterpiece, Ornette and Bird fused in Osby's accelerator and releasing new forces. It's muscular, vital and fresh music – like Ronald Shannon Jackson, Blackman imperiously creates rich and energy-packed musical landscapes all by herself – and though I could have done with more Osby and a little less of Fuczyński's mocking slide guitar wackiness, I'm convinced.

JOHN FORDHAM

DONALD BYRD

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Les Disques Du Soleil Et De L'Acier
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UN DRAME MUSICAL INSTANTANÉ: Urgent Meeting – latest album featuring Louis Seclavis, Colette Magny, Raymond Boni, Didier Melherbe, Gérard Siracuse, Yves Robert, Vinko Globokar (NML/GRRR 2018CD)

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used the bass line from "Think Twice") have so often raided his jazz-fusion tracks for bass lines and samples? What's been called jazz HipHop was actually an assimilation of Byrd's laidback funk into the rap archive – a veneration, alongside James Brown, George Clinton, and Roy Ayers, Chris Phillips has concisely noted the high-points of this period. From 1973's *Blackbyrd* to 1976's *Carnations*, standout cuts like "Street Lady" and "Wind Parade" are excellent both in themselves and for the break he was making with the hard bop orthodoxy of his early Blue Note career as trumpeter with Max Roach and Art Blakey. The old clichés, that this is "minor jazz funk", or "disco-funk" (say what?), are truly an index of the frontiers Byrd breached, the attitudes he assaulted. He learnt enough from his Howard University students Larry and Fonce Mizell to make



them his co-producers. Heading out to destinations unknown, they moved sharply into the cross-town traffic, towards musics never dignified with a genre tag, music that the critics sneered at for not being rigorous enough. Byrd and the Brothers Mizell knew the truth: that in order to sell out, you've got to have something worth selling.

KODWO ESHUN

CABARET VOLTAIRE

Cabaret Voltaire 1974-76

CABS 15CD CD

CABARET VOLTAIRE

Technology

CVCD3 CD/1996

LISTENING to the strange, clipped beauty of Sweet Exorcist's *C.C.C.D.*, Xon's "The

Mood Set" or even the undigested Marshall Jefferson influences of *Groovy, Laidback and Nasty*, I sometimes ask myself why I so thoroughly resisted the music of Cabaret Voltaire during their heyday.

These two collections have given me one answer. Ignoring the Hafler Trio, which I find portentous and insubstantial in self-cancelling proportions, Cabaret Voltaire's offshoots, side-projects, homages and reinventions have reshaped the ideas, sometimes the substance of their ambitious Some Bizarre/Virgin recordings, into something truly exquisite. Praise be to the remix, then, and mutable history, since our work can now be readjusted to suit every era, all tastes, all possible requirements. Maybe it worked for you the first time; now it works for me.

Making a gross generalisation, what we tend to find when comparing nu-tech tracks with archive material is a stark contrast between the nakedly visible, fleshy impact of beautifully sculpted sound and the raw spirit of music captured in its moment of creation. This is not quite what is happening with these two releases, since 1974-76 is a collection of early blueprints and *Technology* is a reworking of 10 tracks from the archives, but the remixes of the latter possess all the breathtaking thud, hiss, semack and smooch now rendered possible by a contemporary studio environment.

Like the few available tracks by Richard Kirk and Rob Gordon's Xon (Network) or Kirk and Baren's Sweet Exorcist (Warp), *Technology* introduces us into a twitchy, sparse world of lifeshaft dynamics. The word "textural" has overworked itself into becoming a furly redundant item in the critical toolbox, yet how else to describe these compact, kinetic little masterpieces of polar opposites? Wet/dry, close/distant, fat/thin, cool/fiercer: a dry twig snapping, a medicine ball landing in peanut butter, a truck driving over a television, a rock falling on a wind harp, a duck flying into a cloud.

Technology developing as it has, tracks such as "Talking Time" and "24-24" have been transformed into little symphonies for drum machines. If you're a drum machine bore (all raise hands please) then they tend to divide between Roland 808 and 909 chips: ie. rubbery boing and ping or splashy thump and sneeze respectively. Like just about everything else at the moment, the works of Cabaret Voltaire are being proposed as the canonic core of the techno revolution. This has some truth in it, but as the remixes prove, these ancient spirits have life in them

yet.

Turning to the ten tracks of oscillator squirts, bleeps and filter crunches collected on 1974-76, I can only say that this is music that should have been recorded in the late 50s rather than the middle 70s. Disco never did suck, and one good reason for that is because disco gave coherence and purpose to sonic investigations that were otherwise trudging up the blind alley of electronic music. Cabaret Voltaire jumped out of that alley, 15 years later, they landed running.

DAVID TOOP

JOEY CALDERAZZO

To Know One

Blue Note CDP 7 98155 2 CD

ONCE THE bright-eyed, sheep-skin jacketed youngster who grinned on the cover of his debut album *In The Door*, pianist Joey Calderazzo now stares pensively into rose-hued oblivion, dressed in a smart brown suit. Has he become more serious about his music or are we to assume the music itself is more serious?

He's certainly joined by some heavyweight musicians on this recording – Jack DeJohnette, Branford Marsalis, Dave Holland, Jerry Bergonzi – as if to affirm his talent. His skills are obvious enough, however – he once graced the bandstand with Mike Brecker producing wonderfully climactic solos, for one so relatively young, he has an awesome command on his instrument. But he's yet to fully find his own voice. There's much of the angular Herbie Hancock/McCoy Tyner lyricism in his playing and it's well used to hold his own on the mostly self-penned tunes. But ultimately his company outshine him. They do their best to stretch out and develop the unique mid-tempo bop compositions – saxman Bergonzi is powerful and virtuosic, DeJohnette ever-forceful with his multiracial rhythms, Marsalis sweet-toned and sophisticated and Holland solidly smooth – but ultimately expose Calderazzo's rather one-dimensional style. On the surface a faultless album, a bit more life-experience is all that's needed.

LAURA CONNELLY

JOHN CALE

Paris S'Éveille – Sans D'Autres

Compositions

Les Disques du Cerveau DE 050924 CD

ly PARIS has woken up, it was without any help whatsoever from John Cale. Chances these days of the Welshman extending any more than a fraction of his once wide-ranging talents for attractive string miniatures, majestically ragged rock minimalism, heart-rending bleak piano ballads or their exact opposite, his lush, loving Brian Wilson parodies, across a whole LP are as remote as a Welsh rugby revival. While the things Cale does well sporadically sparked the mostly disappointing Cale/Eno LP *Wrong Way Up*, his claims to serious composition have been undone on all his recent outings with orchestras and string ensembles. At least the functional requirements of soundtrack work for film and dance companies render this disc more palatable than *Songs For The Dying* – his symphonic settings of Dylan Thomas. Halfhearted, the title piece, composed for Olivier Assayas' film and performed by The Soldier String Quartet, isn't such a bad mood work. The only interest in the other medium-length composition "Sanctus", described as Four Etudes for Electronic Orchestra, is trying to figure out if and where electronics proper enter the picture. "The Cowboy Laughs At The Round-up" begins like it's going to reprise the affecting western elegy "Buffalo Ballet", only for the melancholy to fizzle out like a campfire in the cold dawn drizzle. If "Antarctica Starts Here" is as lovely a Cale ballad as any, the salespoint inclusion of a Velvet Underground rehearsal tape "Booker T" is best unmentioned.

HISA KOPF

MICHEL CUSSON AND THE WILD UNIT

Michel Cusson and the Wild Unit
JMS 060-2 CD

ANOTHER JAZZ-meets-rock encounter, with fashionably ethnic influences thrown in for good measure, but guitarist Cusson's session has more to offer than much of the opposition. For one thing, the Wild Unit are indeed prepared to walk at least in the general direction of the wild side, which takes care of the major problem afflicting this kind of crossover, the terminal tendency to bland-out.

The rhythms are as subtle as sledgehammers for the most part, but they have a genuine power and flexibility which keeps the music moving smartly along right from the Afro-shuffle of the opening "Oukale!

Oukale!". "Le Chant" gets lost in rock guitar clichés, but for the most part Cusson is an inventive guitarist with a sound which lies, in its most interesting moments, somewhere between Scofield and Frisell.

The trump card, at least in terms of warding off rock complacency and fusion *fiangut*, lies in the horn section, with Daniel Martel and Andre Leroux on saxophones, Benoit Glazer on trumpet and Kelsley Grant on trombone. They are deployed much like a big band section, and when they are in action, the music is lifted onto another sonic – and musical – level. Recorded in Vancouver and mixed in Paris, the album has a distinctively Gallic flair which marks it out from crossover projects on both sides of the Atlantic, although maybe not quite enough.

KENNY MATHIESON

FRANCO D'ANDREA & LUIS AGUDO

Enrosadera
Red 125243-2 CD

SIGI FINKEL'S POWERSTATION

Voyeur, Voyeur
Open Minds 2404 CD

QUATRE Earthcake

Label Bleu LBCL 65 59 CD

HIS NAME isn't listed above, but Enrico Rava is the main man here: he trumpets for both Finkel and for the all-star Quatre. Finkel's band – the leader is on tenor and soprano, the rhythm section is young and Austrian – play a deft kind of Eurojazz, the seven pieces unfolding in a slowish way, nothing very distinctive but the whole quite satisfyingly crafted and performed. Finkel himself sounds good on tenor but plays more soprano, and keyboardist Paul Urbanek lends a modest amount of electronics to some of the back-grounds. Rava, though, is the individual voice. Try his solo on the title track: there's as much silence as there is sound, with long, vibratoless tones paired against bubbling runs and sharp, torn-off notes. He's always thinking.

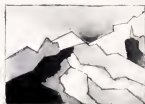
The first few moments of "Three", the opener on *Earthcake*, let you know at once that this is a group on a higher level. Franco D'Andrea's on piano, Mircoav Vitous huddled

les bass, Daniel Humair is at the drums. Although the compositions have individual credits, they feel as if they've all been intuitively organised and improvised by four masters. Vitous and Humair are marvelously in tune – hear the astonishing duct passage on "Ballena", and the way they move from the rubato sequence back into time – while Rava spears out his solos against the professional harmonic ground covered by D'Andrea. The virtuosity is offhand, but absolutely assured.

A pity that D'Andrea's own album for Red is an outright failure. He has a refined touch on piano, but here it's all synthesizers played against the desultory percussion of Luis Agudo. Good therapy for a player wanting to flex his 'eclectic' muscles, but no good reason to make a record, or for anyone to buy it.

MIKE FISH

franco D'ANDREA & luis AGUDO



ENROSADERA

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Pelléas And Mélisande

DG 435 344-2 CD

Sony Classical SM3K 47 265 CD

Erato 2292 45684-2 CD

FEMMES FATALES come in all shapes and sizes. What matters is their mysterious, doomy aura. If anybody were daft enough to give me the chance to direct Debussy's only opera on stage, I'd be laughed out of the opera house, but listening at home I can indulge my vision of *Mélisande* as Hollywood siren. Like all *fémines fatales*, she is an enigma, a *tabula rasa* on which the men around her write their obsessions before, like all obsessives, they are driven to their destruction. And of course they drag *Mélisande* down with them.

For Claudio Abbado (DG), Maria Ewing's *Mélisande* is a bold and knowing Rita Hayworth, for Pierre Boulez (Sony), Eli-

sabeth Söderström is a cool and distant Garbo whose very first words, "Ne me touchez pas!", proclaim that she wants to be alone. For Armin Jordan (Erazo), Rachel Yakar's Mélisande is a childlike ingénue, more Jodie Foster than Shirley Temple. Each incarnation says something about the conductor's interpretation as a whole — Abbado's, lush and glittering; Boulez's, firm and direct; Jordan's delicate and precise.

Where most operas rage with full-blooded emotion, *Pelléas et Mélisande* is filled with hints, false trails and misunderstandings. It demands imagination. Set in the ever-distant, ever-present land of Allemonde (All-the-world), a land beset by traumas and tragedies, it shows a family tree — from which several branches have already been pruned — in the process of petrification and death.



When Boulez conducted the work at Covent Garden in 1969, he wrote an essay, originally included with this recording in 1970 but now sadly missing, in which he wrote that the opera was "a tragedy of middle-class life, with virtually none of the condiments lacking — love, jealousy, violence, a curse and a murder." This was an unusual way to write about an opera which, since its first performance in 1902, had generally been shrouded in a miasma of Symbolist vagueness. But Boulez's insistence on the work's power is a sign that, for all its beautiful circumlocutions, the opera is definitely speaking to us. That's why in the last 18 months we've had two new productions (David Pountney's for English National Opera, and Peter Stein's, conducted by Boulez, for Welsh National Opera); two new recordings (Abbado's, and Charles Dutoit's for Decca, already reviewed here); and a

clutch of reissues of classic recordings, including Boulez's and Jordan's (from 1981).

Each of these recordings makes its case persuasively. I prefer the Boulez for its no-nonsense approach, but there's the problem that none of his singers is French-speaking, so the accents leave something to be desired. So does Ewing's for Abbado, but most of the singers are Francophone, and Jose van Dam is superb as Golaud, impaled on his jealousy. Jordan's is the most thoroughly French set. No obvious first choice, then, but what is obvious is that this is an opera for every denizen of Allemonde.

NICK KIMBERLEY

GRAHAM FITKIN

Slow

Argo 433-690 2CD

WHAT A difference a year makes. Twelve months ago, Graham Fitkin was the pretty one hoisted onto Factory Classical's bandwagon, an apple-cheeked youth with a debut album called *Flak* and a genealogy, that for a composer of post-minimal inclinations (tutors-cum-peers: Nigel Osborne, Louis Andriessen) spelt legitimacy.

Time passes and Fitkin's music, like his physiognomy, has become sterner, sharper and considerably more interesting because of it. *Slow* — a collection of three pieces orchestrated from their original forms for the Smith (string) Quartet and two keyboards — is a complex beast. The rich syncopations that characterised *Flak* are very nearly gone, hidden beneath strident brass snobs of "Huaoh" and "Frame", the slow organ drone of "Slow" and the Bartok-y attacks of the *Smiths*. *Slow* remains as assiduously structured as you'd expect; careful stevenotes detail the transformations peculiar to each piece. The most gratifying transformation comes with "Slow" itself, all sustained, intensifying string parts held down by a barely moving organ line. Unlike Fitkin's idiosyncratic titling policy, "Slow" makes perfect sense.

LOUISE GRAY

SCOTT HAMILTON

Race Point

Concord C-4492 CD/MC

SCOTT HAMILTON must have appeared on approaching 40 albums for the Concord label. On recent issues, however, his playing has shown a new authority and assurance, and if the prolific often spread themselves

thin, that isn't so with the leader of *Race Point*. The fat sound of his relaxed and swinging tenor carries the listener through a nicely thought-out selection of standouts new and old, plus the title-track, an original blues.

When I pigeon-holed Hamilton, Ken Peplowski and Warren Vache as the "détrempe-garde", Peplowski objected. I now stand corrected. *Race Point* is an excellent album, period. Trying to trace influences can give an impression to new listeners of what the player sounds like, and I don't think I'll be upsetting anyone if I say Mr Hamilton's tenor playing doesn't take its cue from John Coltrane. But by now he's well-enough known for potential buyers to guess what they're getting.

His band is an excellent one. There's always been a sneaking suspicion that Gerry Wiggins is one of the scene's great underrated pianistic talents, and that's again confirmed here. His playing is always lucid and he's given full measure on the quartet tracks, especially bluesy on Carl Perkins' "Grooveyard" and Johnny Mandel's "Close Enough For Love". But one of the special joys of the album is the collection of guitar/sax duets; Howard Alden nudges and complements perfectly. On Joe Bushkin's "Oh Look At Me Now" they effortlessly slip into trading licks and then two; the mournful "You're My Thrill" is perfectly paced. If Scott Hamilton was ever the special property of the Eddie Condon Preservation Society, that's no longer so. He flattens his fifths as well as drinking them. ANDY HAMILTON

JULIUS HEMPHILL

Fat Man And The Hard Blues

Black Saint 120115-2 CD

ONCE THE composer for the World Saxophone Quartet, Julius Hemphill is an alto saxophonist who has not had the recognition he deserves. Born in 1938 in Forth Worth, he came to prominence in St Louis in the 60s, a member of the Black Artists Group. His Texas blues and gospel background is reflected in a soaking, immediate sound and supple lines delivered with swagger and an explosive sense of drama. He has an ear for the outreach pioneered by Eric Dolphy.

You get precious little of his alto on this album, though. The emphasis is his ensemble writing for an all-saxophone sextet. The sextet are good players. Andrew White, famous as Coltrane-transcriber (and own-label stand-up comedian), plays a gospel solo

on "Anchorman" which is a highlight: a refreshingly direct examination of Trane's harmonic legacy, the tenor tender and personal. Marty Ehrlich has previously played some outstanding alto with Richard Abrams and Bobby Previte. However, the net result seems less than its illustrious parts.

Hemphill leans on Ellington voicings without ever quite getting Duke's sense of collective fun. The textures – relieved on WSQ albums by the free exhortations of David Murray and Oliver Lake – get very samey. Investigate Jean-Paul Bourelly's *Jangle Cowboy* for what Hemphill is capable of as a soloist. The sextet have a welcome blue liberty with ensemble discipline, but Hemphill does not take enough risks as a composer: the music ends up polished but somehow dull.

BEN WATSON

PAUL HINDEMITH

Ludes Tonales

Globe GL05044 CD

"HINDEMITH? Who's he? Never heard of him!" Thus Inspector Curry in Agatha Christie's *They Do It With Mirrors*, and, as the policeman implies, this German master has long been neglected. Latterly Hindemith composed in a manner which – in the face of atonality and the consequent emergence of serial methods – restored the meaning of tonality as a vehicle both for expression and for structural processes. The results may not have quite the brilliant impact of his best 1920s music but are superior in depth of emotional content and unified variety of formal ordering.

Subtitled "Studies in Counterpoint, Tonal Organisation and Piano Playing", Hindemith's *Ludes Tonales* (1942) alternates 11 Interludes with 12 Fugues that move outwards from C to F-sharp and demonstrate a progressive weakening of tonal orientation. The whole is framed with a Prelude and Postlude that are retrograde inversions of each other; there are other mirror relationships, too, and the thematic links between Fugues and Interludes in the middle of the work become more indirect as one moves outwards in either direction. Though such resolute structuralism may seem oppressive, the range of expression is wide, taking in, for example, Fugue 4's exhilarating logic, 5's quick-moving pugnacity, 9's whimsicality, 12's quietly luminous beauty.

Recorded in Amsterdam in 1990, Ivo Janssen plays it all extremely well. Unfortunately he is up against a reading by Svatoslav

Richter. This was taken down at Grange de Mesley during the Fêtes Musicales de Touraine of 1985, and Richter experiences every note so vividly as to lead us towards doing the same. To the attraction of a profound interpretation is added that of his including an extra piece, Hindemith's Sonata No. 2. So Richter's is the version to go for, but if you cannot find his poorly distributed Pyramid 13497, Janssen's Globe will prove an excellent substitute.

MAX HARRISON

TERUMASA HINO

From The Heart

Blue Note CDP 7 96688 2 CD

This is archetypal hard bop.

It's trumpeter player Terumasa Hino's debut album as a leader and the first time the 50-year-old has made a record with his own band. Like many a trumpeter he's had his love affair with Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard and displays many of these player's nuances – late Milesian blips and shrinks, Hubbard-like spray of notes – as well as his own more avant garde squeaks and growls. No slack phrasing or fluffed notes here – his horn bursts through the fierce tempos with the bravura of a young Turk. He's chosen similarly adroit players – Roger Bryan (ss), John Hart (gs), Onaje Allan Gumbs (p), Michael Formanek (b) and Michael Carvin (d). Not house musicians or big record company names to pump up his reputations but players who function as a band. And it works. Aggressive rolls from Carvin, spacious comping from Hart and Gumbs as well as intricate soloing compliment Hino's blistering style. Hino is a formidable technician but at times his fire and disciplined approach is too much. It works well on the pacy, straight-ahead numbers but ballads such as "Over The Rainbow" are attacked with such athletic intervallic leaps that any emotion is subjugated by a sort of aural *laissez-faire*.

Hino's sideman credits – Jackie McLean, Larry Coryell's fusion band Eleventh Hour and John Scofield – are reflected in the maturity of his tunes, they just need a bit more (ahem) soul.

LAURA CONNELLY

ANDRE JAUME/CHARLIE HADEN/OLIVIER CLERC

Peace / Paix / Paix

CELP C 19 CD

ANDRE JAUME & CHARLIE

MARIANO

Abbaye De L'Epan

CELP C 20 CD

"QUIET FIGURE of European jazz" – thus does Jean-Paul Ricard characterise Andre Jaume in the notes to CELP C 20, and it's a truthful description. Jaume is a saxophonist who seldom raises his voice, who takes the simplest route to a resolution and who lingers without dawdling on points of detail. He has a clean, just slightly troubled tone that can be profoundly affecting without once seeming mawkish or overwrought. There are moments on the trio set where he gets somewhere near agitation: Django Reinhardt's "Anouman", for instance, where his solo swings off the steady roll of bass and drums. But more typical is the steady, reflective curve which his improvisations



track through each piece. On bass clarinet he gets a hollow, even sound, quite unlike the woody or guttural timbre which most players seek.

Peace/Paix/Paix makes much of an Ornette Coleman link – there are two Coleman themes, Haden is present, and the open drift of the music passes down from the old man – but Jaume is really nothing like Coleman. He's his own man. But Mariano makes an excellent partner, for a duet record which is close kin to the earlier *Efflu* (CELP 6) with Jimmy Guiffre. These are sober, rather grave meditations, a sequence of songs where the two players disburse their separate remarks and they occasionally interweave. "Kartik", with Mariano on wooden flute, brings out his pixilated side, but it's otherwise cast on another very even dynamic level, poised and really rather beautiful.

MIKE FISH

THE JAZZ CRUSADERS

Freedom Sound

Pacific Jazz CPD 770664 2 CD

RONNIE LAWS

The Best Of Ronnie Laws

Blue Note CPD 798289 2 CD

BACK in the early 60s, when *Freedom Sound* was first recorded, The Jazz Crusaders were a group of Texan lads whose blending of blues, R&B, jazz and swing-beat rhythms had yet to find a niche in the commercial market. This, a reissue of their debut album, features the four original Crusaders: Wilton Felder, Wayne Henderson, Joe Sample and group leader Stix Hooper in a well organised and tight if rhythmically somewhat rigid association. This brand of clean-cut, Adderley-

expertise on *Solid Ground*. In the same vein, but not as up-beat and funky as later Crusaders, the heavily synthesized textures and muted vocals make an earnest (but uneventful) listen.

ADELE YARON

JAZZ CUSSION/MARION

BROWN

Native Land

ITM 1471 CD

THE PAIRING of altoist Brown, who's something of an avant-garde survivor from the 1960s, with a German band called Jazz Cussion who play a kind of Latin-American fusion is, well, 'unexpected' is as good a word as any. 'Ludicrous' could be another, of course, but that would be after you'd heard the disc.

Brown still retains most of the characteristics he displayed in his early years – a highly vocalised, variable tone, harmonic disregard rather than purely melodic freedom and the ability to build rhythmically asymmetrical structures. These qualities are precisely demonstrated on his solo version of 'I Can't Get Started', and again in duet with German altoist Uder Hagen Zempel on 'Double Talk', tracks from which the problems created by Jazz Cussion are absent.

Elsewhere, the ability these guys have to reduce both harmonic and rhythmic dimensions to a kind of confused tragedy – the impression is of four people continually falling over themselves and each other as they plod along – guarantees that the rest of the proceedings remain stuck firmly in the mud they've churned up. I haven't heard anything quite like it for a long time.

JACK COOKE

GEORGE JONES

Salutes Hank Williams and Bob Wills

EMI CDP 7989272 CD

COUNTRY MUSIC is riddled with obsessions, about sex, marriage, religion, family, death, but its most pervasive obsession is with its own history. On the one hand, the country singer tries to escape the past, to make country New, on the other, the music's history is a talisman by which the bond between performer and audience is authenticated and renewed. The past evokes agrarian purity and community, things to cling to in the midst of urban (or suburban) isolation.

Nothing exemplifies this obsession more clearly than country's undying willingness to

sing a Hank Williams song. By the time Williams had lived himself to death, aged 29, in 1953, he had expanded country's range to embrace every human moment from birth to death – for which his flat, nasal voice displayed a terrifying affinity. The multiple marriages, the boozing, the restless travelling and womanising which apparently destroyed him took on mythic, even healing qualities; while to sing a Hank Williams song was to be dipped in the musical life-blood.

George Jones is country's finest singer since Hank Williams. His voice has a greater range – both technical and expressive – and his life has its share of the torments which are obligatory for a honky-tonk CV. Jones was already older than Williams at the time of his death when he recorded his 'salute' in 1962, but the recording was a young apprentice's rare of passage, an assertion that Jones knew his history and his place in it.

One of the Bob Wills songs which Jones tackles is 'Time Changes Everything', but the whole point of the exercise is to assert, perhaps desperately, that time changes nothing. In a career that began in the 1940s and ended in the 1970s, Bob Wills forged a union between country, blues and jazz – Western Swing. He paved the way for rockability, the idiom in which George Jones began his career, but there was an effectiveness in even the most melancholy Wills song and Jones is best suited to unadulterated misery. Perhaps that makes his tribute all the more touching, if less satisfying than his paeon to Hank Williams. What originally appeared as two separate LPs now emerges as a moving testament to the enabling power of musical tradition.

NICK KIMBERLEY

THOMAS KOENER

Temoo

Baroque BAR 005 CD

IN MORE ways than one, Thomas Koener keeps his nose to the ground. His first disc *Namatak Gogonaw* replayed Scott's death in the Antarctic on a miked-up and electronically enhanced gong. The bowed and scraped hum that pierced the grey-white gloom of silence gradually formed into barely moving shapes that seemed to fade on impact with cymshot. A rarity, it compelled listening on its own terms, a genuine masterpiece of sorts. Containing even less information and



influenced soul jazz may have launched their career, but it was not until they moved over to Motown, incorporated the 70s funk tradition and drafted in artists like Larry Carlton, Max Bennett and Hubert Laws, that they gained wider recognition, and subsequent commercial success. So be warned, *Freedom Sound* is not The (later) Crusaders of 'Street-life' fame; but it has its own groove, worth looking into.

The jazz style prevalent during the emergence of funk as a popular music form is embodied in the recordings of Ronnie Laws. Largely produced by trombonist Wayne Henderson, the majority of tracks on this collection are pure, excellent muzik. The soulful sax sound of Ronnie Laws can best be sampled on his now over-exposed composition *Always There* (Incognito, Side Effect, Willie Bobo . . .). And bringing the flute towards jazz, Hubert Laws demonstrates his

incident, its successor *Texas* pitches its rumbles even lower, like it was trying to simulate, musically speaking, the very last molecules of heat leaving a corpse. Again, after the necessary listening adjustments necessary, to picking out minute agitations of atmosphere, *Texas* proves to be as quietly disturbing as it is astonishing. The slightest metallic manipulation emits a sound wave that gathers the remaining signs of life, no matter how minute, into a relatively dense mist of noise rolling across the silence. If they're evidently not teeming with life, it is perfectly acceptable, no proscription intended, to register Koerner's sometimes barely perceptible hums as ghosts of music. He records what was once alive, and that places his work ahead of 98.6 per cent of the competition.

NINA KOPF

KRONOS QUARTET

Pieces of Africa

Elektra-Nonesuch 7559 79275-2 CD/MC

HERE are eight pieces for string quartet by seven African composers. Only two, Volans and Tamsuza, are content with string alone, and the latter's "Ekirundu Ekasooka" is decently written, with fairly interesting ideas, and making a resourceful use of the medium. Maresau adds drumming to his first and a gospel choir to his second piece. The former, "Mai Nozipo," is simple, with cheerful repetitions and a brief sad passage in the middle; then happiness returns. "Saade," too, apparently means "I'm Happy" and for this Hakmoon adds voices, so the strings recede into the background.

In the case of Suso's "Tilliboyo" (meaning "summer") the composer's unobtrusive kora playing is joined to the Kronos team's exertions, and the result, melodious with lots of pizzicatos, is not without a certain fugitive charm. Considering that it evidently evokes a waterfall, Din's "Escalay" is surprisingly dramatic and makes a telling use of some of the quartet's capacities, although the piece is too long for its slender thematic inventions. For his dancelike and again chaotic "Waw-shishishjay" Addy adds voices and percussion, so the strings once more retire into rather simple repetitions.

The Kronos Quartet recorded Volans' "White Man Sleeps" before, on Nonesuch 979.163-1 in 1988. On that occasion I suggested elsewhere that its second movement possesses "an insect-like buzzing persistence that is amusing at first," and it

seems the composer does not entirely disagree. At least, in the booklet accompanying this new version, he writes of the work as being expressive of an environment rather than a culture: "the sounds of the birds and the insects are totally different from Europe . . ." It remains to be said that the Kronos guys and gal play superbly throughout (better than much of this music deserves) and that the diverse elements used in these compositions are most sensitively balanced in the recordings.

MAX HARRISON

DAVID LIEBMAN

Classic Ballads

Candel C79512 CD

A FRESH and affectionate treatment of classics from the Great Book of American Popular Song. Dave Liebman offers a saxophone equivalent of the oblique treatment Ran Blake and Paul Bley might give these songs; and Blake's Spanish tinge is echoed here in the guitar-work of Vic Juris, especially on "Dancing In The Dark" and "On Green Dolphin Street".

If "Dancing In The Dark" has a Spanish (even perhaps a tango) feel, you'd guess that something unusual was going on here, and you'd be right. Dave Liebman unusually dedicates the album to his mother-in-law Natalie, whose picture appears on the front and who chose the material. He considers her "the epitome of the non-professional jazz listener"; Dave himself is of course the epitome of the jazz professional, creating consistently fine music for no financial gain. (He said once that he didn't have an agent any more because "10 per cent of nothing is still nothing".)

Apart from the choice of material, in fact, almost everything is non-standard; including, therefore, the collision of songs and setting. Liebman chose the line-up of saxophones backed simply by guitar and/or bass (Steve Gilmore) with a particular end in view: "the challenge is always is to transform these gems into a personal vehicle suitable for one's own style." He succeeds brilliantly. The trio conjures the most spectral version of "Out Of Nowhere" I've heard, "Angel Eyes" is in the 6/8 time Mingus introduced to jazz — it can't have been done like that before. Hoagy Carmichael's "Skylark", just for a change, is conventionally very beautiful.

ANDY HAMILTON

JOE MCPHEE

Linear B

bat ART CD6057 CD

MCPHEE'S ACCOMPANYING notes comment that documentation of his work (once reasonably prolific) has slowed to nothing in the last several years. These January 1990 sessions show why this is a great pity. Apparently intended to be heard in conjunction with a new suite added to the forthcoming reissue of 1979's *Old Eyes*, they present McPhee at the height of his creativity, both thoughtful and moving.

Altogether seven musicians are involved including regular collaborators Andre Jaume and Raymond Boni, but the largest ensembles are quintets and many of the tracks are duos, some not featuring Joe himself; such is the sense of concentration and creativity that



JOE MCPHEE: PIONEER MUSIC LINEAR B

this is scarcely a disadvantage. McPhee's own duet contributions range from "Here's That Rainy Day" with bassist Leon Francioli (and dedicated to Chet Baker) to the more ethereal "Say That To Say This" (inspired by the equally deceased Clifford Thornton) with the haunting echo on Joe's trumpet enveloping the spacious soprano of Urs Leimgruber. Joe's duo with percussionist Fritz Hauser has his own soprano shadowed by electronically-generated quartal harmonies.

The sparse use of electronics doesn't come across as a distracting end in itself, any more than the Aylersah soprano vibrato on the opening "Love Life". Neither does the long version of "Footprints" sound like an untypical bid for mainstream popularity — mostly out of tempo, it is less a detective story than a meditation on the evidence. A final positive negative is that the strumming of two guitars on the closer "Voices" (Joe's

answer to the "Concierto De Aranjuez"? is a long way from the Gipsy Kings, despite one of them being played by Christy Doreen.

There's a lot more detail to talk about, but why not listen instead? The recording quality adds considerably to the purposefulness of the entire enterprise. **BRIAN PRIESTLEY**

**MICHAEL NYMAN /
UTE LEMPER**

Songbook
Decca 425 227-2 CD/MC

PIANO CIRCUS
*Chris Fithian / Michael Nyman /
Tim Seddon / Simon Rackham*
Ago 435 522-2 CD

DESPITE A now weighty back catalogue of setting quartets, soundtracks and the odd

Michael Nyman
SONGBOOK
Ute Lemper

RECORD



opera, Michael Nyman is not generally thought of as a writer for voice. Or if he is, it's immediately clear that his interest lies only in voices at their most histrionic. The *Misere* from *The Cook, The Thief...* is pitched at glass-shattering levels, and much of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* swells and dips like a bad day on the Bay of Biscay. Only *Out Of The Ruins*, his immensely moving choral response to the 1988 Armenian earthquake, escapes these edgy voices at full stretch.

Songbook is six song settings of the poems of Paul Celan, three Ariel songs (reworked from *Priguer's Books*), two Rimbaud settings, and *I Am An Unusual Thing* (Nyman's contribution to BBC2's *Not Mozart* series). The histrionics are certainly present. But singer Ute Lemper is also subtle. There are sly nuances as well as the bombast. There is a looseness, an interplay between voice and

Nyman's band that has never before been so conspicuous; the sawing strings and pulsing downbeats typical of his style are not entirely absent; the vigorous leads usually taken by Alexander Balanescu's strings have been transposed to Lemper's voice.

It's a formidable translation. Lemper's technique is all high drama and small intimacy, but she moves with consummate ease between stridency and numerous tender moments. Nyman reputedly gave a free hand in her performance, and if there is something slightly Weill-y about this on the Celan songs, there's also a powerful charge beneath the cycle.

It was only a matter of time before Nyman's *I-100* was resurrected, and the *Piano Circus* sextet have chosen this piece of Britain's vintage avant-garde as a highlight of their second album, between three young British composers. *I-100* has not been available since Eno snapped it up for release on his Obscure label in 1976; in the interim Nyman has become a bigish cheese.

It's music not for the ear alone. Originally written for four or more pianos, it requires pianists to play the same sequence of 100 descending chords. As players can only move to the next chord when the previous chord ceases to sound, it throws up harmonic clusters of varying types, but remains an experiment in decay, an economical idea that (at nearly 22 minutes) lasts a very, very long time.

Chris Fithian's *Sextet* and Tim Seddon's 16 explore familiar ground. Both owe a large debt to Steve Reich, and despite the latter's rich syncopation, or the former's studied hocketing, it is their shared inspiration who dominates. But *What Ever Way Your Not Bend* - Simon Rackham's response to Reich's *Six Pianos* - provides the album's triumph. From a virtual standstill of singly sounding keys, Rackham introduces simple melodies that - with the continuous use of the sustain pedals - emulate bells, to produce a sepulchral and rather beautiful effect. At 31 minutes, *What Ever Way* is also very long; this time, you don't notice. **LOUISE GRAY**

VALERY PONOMAREV
Profile

Reservoir RSR CD 119 CD

THIS IS an album that tells a story. A Russian trumpeter, obsessed with jazz, lays his hands on some old Clifford Brown recordings, defects to the West and takes up the trumpet

stool with Art Blakey's Messengers. He absorbs the soulful trumpeter's style and develops an eloquent vocabulary and refreshingly unfashionable vibrato sound.

Profile is a hard-bop collection in the sense that it has the speed and intricacies that you'd hear Nat Adderley or Freddie Hubbard play, but it's no vacuous replication. Ponomarev's tunes may sound like many you've heard from that era but there's a respect and unegotistical individuality, an authentic emotion and feeling. Ponomarev is a from-the-heart player. He trades ideas with his company, Joe Henderson, Kenny Barton, bass player Essiet Essiet and drummer Victor Jones, with a modest seriousness - where Henderson flutters in with hummingbird gracefulness and authoritative command of the changes, Ponomarev counters with fitness and fire. Consequently, the tracks bristle with sensitivity and melody.

Cookin', unpretentious good music.

LAURA CONNELLY

MARCUS ROBERTS
At Serenity Approaches

News PD90634 CD

THIS FOLLOW up to *Along With Three Giants* continues the pianist's exploration of early jazz styles, but broadens the agenda in several ways. The focus on Morton, Ellington and Monk is extended to cover a wider range of the standard repertoire, and also nine of Roberts's own tunes in the 17 tracks, or ten in 19, if you count the second version of "Angel" which opens and closes the album. It is paired with two distinctively characterised versions of Ray Noble's "Cherokee", which stress the tune's roots as well as its subsequent status as a bebop anthem in the hands of Charlie Parker.

The most salient feature of his approach to this music is his development of a fully two-handed playing style, with the left hand providing an elaborately-developed rhythm accompaniment, rather than sketching in the time under the melodic and harmonic forays of the right hand, as has been the standard post-bop practice.

The results are impressive in most cases (a rather fussy reading of "I Remember You" seems the only significant blot), and once again reveal Roberts as a player of great technical facility as well as inherent musicality, with a finely-honed sense of form and structure which is equally evident in his playing and in his arrangement of the mate-

rial on the album.

The other divergence from the previous set is the introduction of duets with Ellis Margolis (they give exquisite examples of how to keep out of each other's way on "The Jitterbug Waltz" and "Broadway"), saxophonist and clarinetist Todd Williams, trumpeters Wynton Marsalis, Nicholas Payton and Scotty Barnhart, and trombonist Ronald Wesley. Satisfying though these are, the heart of the album is Roberts's solo piano, and if you have liked his previous work, then it's odd-one-out you will also enjoy this one.

KENNY MATHIESON

STEN SANDELL

Music From A Waterhole

ALCD 005 CD

STEN is from Stockholm, he is into dead fish – beached, puff-cheeked, sand-floored – and his waterhole muzak (no slur intended) sounds like a rolodex spectrum of rock-jazz-improv flickers. He plays piano, organ, harmonium and adroitly deploys sampling keyboards. A lot of percussion (either sampled or strack) goes off like modal fireworks; and one Peter Soderberg contributes lute and something called a theorb (NB, not to be confused with The Orb, ambient fans).

Sten may sound at times like The Greatest Non-Vocal Birds of Soft Machine/Zappa, but his set-up never sounds like a prefix echo job(jot), by virtue of a singular formal approach: 15 water wholes, from the soothing to moments of extreme perCUSSive argy bargy. John Phillip Sousa-goes-software-virus. ECM vs Extreme Noise Terror. Silt and shells and dog star tales dredged from topographic oceans. Or something.

Add moments of v. fetching Dadaist scat singing and discreetly unidentifiable gongs and strings and things, and fans of anyone from This Heat to Wyatt to Can to Frisell to The Orb (passim) can get their aquatic waterside rocks off. There's a gradation to this sort of thing – post-Zappa modal play – which risks clever-dickery for its own sake. At one end of the scale (pun intended) you can sound like muscle-lift music for *The Crystal Maze*, at the other lies the Sublime. Sten guns for the *uh-uh* every time . . .

A fluid music which seeps into your memory circuits. Favourite: the gorgeous Eastern-sunrise slowjig acoustic glass of "Gods And Men III" which is like the soundtrack to a Paul Bowles micro-weave tragedy.

Ambient with a bee in its gullet. Or mullet.

IAN PENMAN

ALEX SCHLIPPENBACH QUARTET

Das Hobe Lied

Po Torch PTR/JWD 16/17 2LP

QUINTET MODERNE

The Strange And The Commonplace

Po Torch PTR/JWD 19/5 12"

WHAT is it? Why this set? In Paul Lovens's extensive liner note to the Schlippenbach group record (AS, Lo, Evan Parker, Alan Silva), he explains how what should have been the music for an FMP record was discarded by Jost Gebers and could only be salvaged on a rough-mix cassette. The result, some 90 minutes of music from two 1981 Berlin concerts, is on this double-LP. It is rough, sonically. And the music resembles, perhaps, the set released as *Detto Fra Di Noi*, also on Po Torch. Yet Lovens knew that this music "had to be on Po Torch record". Why?

The Quintet Moderne (Lovens, Paul Rutherford, Teppo Hautaaho, Harri Sjoström, Phil Wachsmann) played a three-and-a-half minute "coda" to a set in Finland, 1989. It's on this record. In fact, it's all this record. Three-and-a-half minutes (sumptuously packaged, *vo passim*). Lo has listened to it "more than a thousand times now". Why?

Locked up in a world with countless thousand records, we search for something with an ounce more magic than the rest. In judging the worth of an improvisation, simple criteria – excitement, accuracy, intricacy, virtuosity – fall before some indefinable . . . what? Why did the co-creator of these improvisations deem them to be so valuable? I'm not sure I have an answer. But having listened, as closely as time allows, and absorbed this work by some of the musicians whose work has meant so much to me as a listener, I think that both records – one so long, and the other so short – answer the question in their own way. RICHARD COOK

JOHN SCOFIELD

Grace Under Pressure

Blue Note CDP 938167 CD

In a little read (if semanal) article in the obscure underground freebie newspaper *Jazz In The North* I once wrote "Derek Bailey is a watershed for guitar modernism. You can distinguish Bill Frisell's playing, with its abrupt turns and blasted cul-de-sacs, from John Scofield's coherent blues rapture precisely because of Bailey's influence". If only

criticism could contemplate itself in endless perfection. It can't. Why not? Musicians. Scofield invites his polar opposite to play on his album!

Scofield starts with a perfect example of his whole-tone coherence, expert blues guitar runs etc. Frisell counters with a Bailey-like stutter that links back to chamber-jazz reticence. They play together as might Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson, smart solo following smart solo on an efficient but anonymous bass/drum canvas (provided by Charlie Haden and Joey Baron, of all people).

On "Scenes From A Marriage" Frisell suddenly cuts loose, but it goes against the grain of Scofield's concept. On "Pretty Out" Frisell has another try at making it a Frisell record, but Haden and Baron are so ill-suited – or mis-directed – they can only supply a muddled tradidrop backdrop.



I suppose the idea was to compare guitar styles by recording a "straight-ahead" date, but unfortunately jazz is not a *lingua franca* for these guitarists. Here Frisell sounds so far ahead in terms of harmonic imagination and textual expression that he can't fit the mainstream mould.

BEN WATSON

SELMER SAXOPHONE QUARTET

The Meeting

Blue Note CD 9381 CD

AT FIRST I did wonder why there was six of them in the photograph, but it transpires that the Selmer Quartet is used essentially as an ensemble, with soloists Jim Odgren on alto and Ab Schapp on tenor also involved. These two also provided all the writing and

arranging, much of it on Oliver Nelson themes. There's much technical elegance on display – after all this is essentially what saxophone quartets are all about, together with a touch of that kind of exclusive hubris which is another familiar factor in such outfits.

Odgren and Schaap feature on most tracks, though their solos break no new ground. The writing finds some interesting voicings and the Selmer lads, though notionally a "classical" saxophone quartet, display a good sense of time – none of the stiffness that can inhibit "classical" players – of whatever instrument – in this field.

"April In Paris" is entirely by the quartet – no solos – but it's an unwise choice; the song has been dominated for years by the dazzling Benny Carter-ish sax passage in the Basie classic: Schaap's version reflects this, yet

all directions at once.

The title track is just Simmons plus a grooving rhythm section of Joe Bonner, piano, Herbie Lewis, bass and Billy Higgins on drums and is a medium swinger that showcases Simmons's vibrant blue tone. On the other tracks he's joined by Joe Hardin, trumpet, Al Thomas, trombone and Michael Marcus, baritone sax. They move and groove together; "Title X" drifts into focus through an abstract intro and turns out to be a haunting ballad with an elegant Bonner solo followed by Simmons in Dolphy-esque mode, more angular than Ornette, less profound than Parker. "Manhattan Out" harks back to Simmons's days in the 1960s on the Contemporary label. It makes you wonder where he's been all this while.

STUART NICHOLSON

SWANS

Love Of Life

Young God YGCD 5 CD

SWANS EMERGED TO SET OUT a musical and philosophical dead end. Their songs crawled out of New York in 1982 – the screams of besieged psyche tethered to a monstrously loud slug-beat, a monochrome exploration of wrong and right. Musically, *Love Of Life* (along with its predecessor *White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity*) pushes the colour up full, although the issues remain the same: the human quest to cover up fallibility and weakness, to grasp power at all costs; to leave its mark at anyone or anything's expense, no matter how filthy the methods employed or results induced.

With *Love Of Life*, Michael Gira, sole original Swans, has composed an epic musical setting for his unending tales of punishment and reward. Guitars chime like church bells, backing vocals sweep across plunging rhythms, and Gira's evangelically toned baritone growl is illuminated. "The Golden Boy That Was Followed By The Sea" builds a vast panoramic sound up to biblical proportions. "Amnesia" retains a timeless classical quality comparable to Cress-era Joy Division, while "In The Eyes Of Nature" weaves eastern melodies between a pounding slave march, repeating life cycles over and over.

At the heart of their brutalist beginnings there was always a lust for life, a need for sensation, anything to affirm existence beyond numbing enslavement. This LP continues Gira's search for a reason to live, via the realities of myths and dreams, the effects

of escapes or immersion, the points at which fantasy collides with reality. He's drawn here to America's latest escape-mode: nostalgia for a bygone age; the yearning for a lost paradise of open frontiers and untouched lands, a land before hippies bore yuppies, a land raped by human desire, a land he knows can never be again.

Swans haven't swapped musical sides, sold out or gone commercial. They've just grown taller, now managing to voice feelings of insignificance without rubbing the listener's nose in it.

K. MARTIN

JOHN TAYLOR

Blue Grass

Roanne Scott's Jazz House JHCD 020 CD/MC/LP

SOME MUSICIANS will reject the notion that they've been 'influenced' by another player, even when they come up with something remarkably similar. Taylor, to his credit, has made no secret of his attachment to Bill Evans' music, and there's no doubt it's as good a replication as you can get. Though it is only reproduction; what you don't get is the strength of emotion that Evans stirred in his piano-playing, from the fresh/romantic moments of his early work to the driven intensity of his final performances. Never mind, British jazz has always appreciated the technical, the 'good player', and Taylor is that and more.

Where he scores is when he takes this style into areas Evans himself rarely explored – Billy Stewart's "Think Before You Think", a tricky theme like Taylor's own rhythmically complex "Q" jolt the music into a somewhat different perspective – Evans' own rhythmic complexity was instinctively internal rather than externally imposed – and there's also an affecting gentleness when Taylor confronts directly one of his master's own classic performances, as on "Spring is Here".

So it made me think. It also sent me straight back to Bill Evans' own records, which maybe isn't supposed to be the plan.

JACK COOKE

MARTIN TAYLOR

Change Of Heart

Lean AKD 016 CD/LP

It's 30 years since Charlie Christian died. He never recorded as a leader and his recorded legacy stretches a little over two years. Yet his influence on the electric guitar has been



reveals only the cultural gentility into which this format ultimately always tries to lead us.

JACK COOKE

SONNY SIMMONS

Backwoods Sante

West Wind 2074 CD

THE LINER NOTES refer to this album as an obscure session from the early '80s. That it may be, but it burns. Simmons is an alto saxophonist who flies with the kind of crazy logic of early Ornette. Just as Ornette had been heavily into Bird, Simmons has also taken what he needs from Parker, maxing certainty with uncertainty, an inside player threatening to go outside at any moment. He sounds dangerous, on "Sparrow's Last Jump" a Bird-song that shows this duality best, his fingers fly with the force of ideas that leap in

profound. Generation after generation of guitarists have been left in thrall to the basic vocabulary he worked out in the early 1940s. Even now, as Martin Taylor shows, Christian's influence remains as strong as ever. His essentially linear, non-chordal approach to improvising, his long lines of evenly articulated quavers and his astute harmonic wisdom allowed him to shape not only a style but a whole conception of improvisation on his instrument.

Martin Taylor circles in close orbit to the lines of demarcation marked out by Christian and the rather claustrophobic role-model hierarchy that followed in his wake. They include Jimmy Raney, Tal Farlow, Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis, Wes Montgomery and Kenyatta Barrett just for starters, and their lights have also guided Taylor's path. This does make for a similarity of style and execution that can ultimately be limiting. Even so, Taylor is a massively competent guitarist who builds on Christian's conception to come up with a smooth, untruffled style full of unexpected note choices on "73 Berkley Street", long, breathless blues-drenched lines on "You Don't Know Me" and Montgomery-influenced parallel octaves on "After Hours." Taylor's discography has been short of an album that adequately testifies his talent, and this is it. **STUART NICHOLSON**

WILLEM VAN MANEN'S CONTRABAND

De Ruyter Sayte
Bivona CD/104 CD

THE TITLE piece is in three movements together lasting about 35 minutes, and the total playing time is nearly 64 minutes. Recorded in April 1991, van Manen – long a member of the Breuker Kollektief, of de Volharding etc – used a large band of conventional instrumentation for a work that is ambitious and less unconvincingly structured than many comparable large-scale, or at any rate long-lasting jazz undertakings. "Cosina" and "Parade" are also his, while "Tony" is by Eckhard Koltermann.

"De Ruyter Sayte" is a bit monochrome, yet constantly eventful with many striking textures such as the busy muted trumpets passage in the first movement. The most successful, or least the most stylistically consistent, movement is the slow second, in effect a concerto for bass clarinet (played by Koltermann). Here van Manen's writing is altogether personal, but in the outer move-

ments, especially the first, exploratory ideas are often not taken quite far enough and fall back into fairly conventional procedures. There is an uneasy mixture – not a fusion – of old and new. The finale shifts more decisively towards dangerous terrain and there are some brave fragmentations, although the final minute and a half or so represents something of a linguistic retreat.

There are questions to be asked about the solos too. Paul van Kemnade's alto saxophone bopping is very accomplished yet seems backward-looking in the unsettled context of the first movement. Louis Lanza (trumpet) and particularly Jeroen van Vliet (piano) manage rather better. "Cosina" takes up a more constantly advanced position, "Parade" rather less so, and it is to be hoped that the former represents the path he will follow. Certainly van Manen's next issue will be awaited with interest and he meanwhile should be congratulated on having secured excellent performances of some very difficult scores.

MAX HARRISON

VARIOUS ARTISTS

60 Great Blues Recordings
Catalase CB0XCD 3 CDs

IN THE Los Angeles of the late 40s and 50s, the three Bihari brothers built their independent record company into a force to be reckoned with. On their multitude of labels – Blues And Rhythm, RPM, Kent and many more – they released a broad variety of music by a myriad of local hopefuls, some of whom became stars, and by almost as many fading stars seeking a reversal of fortune. By the late 70s, new recording had virtually ceased, but the Biharis continually re-packaged their back catalogue, rather like Studio One in Jamaica, after years of recording almost anyone who came knocking they could put something together for an album by whichever artist happened currently to be in the limelight.

Also in the 70s, Ace Records in Britain began to lease material from the brothers, developing a coherent reissue programme. Ace staffers delved breathlessly through the vast vaults at the Biharis' South Normandie Boulevard HQ, resulting in many tracks seeing the light of day for the first time. Finally, last year, they bought the Biharis' entire back catalogue and have expended time and effort on the daunting task of digitally re-mastering their Christmas presents to themselves for CD release.

Sixty Bihari productions (or rather 59, as a lone John Lee Hooker track was leased from modestly-dubbed indie producer Lee Sensation), simply but serviceably packaged, form this three-disc set. Enveloped rather than boxed despite its catalogue number, it covers a wide spectrum of blues styles, concentrating on the late 40s and early 50s and understandably including a preponderance of West Coast artists. Compiler Ted Carroll has eschewed a "greatest hits" approach to track selection; nor has he stuffed the discs with rocking blues, or soul blues. Almost every track here, with the exception of the dreadful "If That's The Way You Feel" which must have got singer Muckie Champion ejected from many a L.A. night club in 1951, is the real thing.

Some of the artists sound not long uprooted from the cotton fields, such as the



guitarist Pinetop Smith whose "Applejack Boogie" must have sounded archaic even in 1949, or the robust one-man band Joe Hill Louis. The majority, though, know their way around a city: urbane urbans like Big Joe Turner, Floyd Dixon or Jimmy Witherspoon exude slickness on mainly downtempo, sax and piano-laden blues, and cheery Gene Phillips interrupts his praise of big fat mamas to dish up a peach of a steel guitar feature on the imaginatively titled "Gene's Guitar Blues".

The true stars are here, too. Elmore James music on "Sho Nuff I Do", Howlin' Wolf primal and puissant on "Riding In The Moonlight", Walter Horton the mouth harp maestro on the zestful "Hard Hearted Woman", T-Bone Walker, Lowell Fulson, Roy Brown, and five cuts performed with verve and faultless style by a young and hungry B.B. King.

The sound quality is variable (from master tapes unsurprisingly a little battered in some cases); Smoke Wilson's two 1977 cuts are limp by comparison. The music is excellent: a collector's selection in High Street packaging.

MIKE ATHERTON

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rebirth Of The Cool Too

4th & Broadway VRL P582 LP/MC/CD

LAST YEAR'S compilation *The Rebirth Of The Cool* marked a fascinating point in the development of HipHop. Mining of the James Brown archive had given way to renewed excavation of the obscurest reaches of 70s funk; just a short step to the jazz funk of the early Donald Byrd (Stersasonic's "Talking All That Jazz", the first major jazz-based HipHop track was based on a loop of the



Byrd track "Dominoes"), and the increased use of jazz funk generally, labels such as Fantasy, Prestige, and Blue Note all being widely sought after. Gang Starr's "Jazz Thing", a highlight of the first *Rebirth*, captured Jazz HipHop at its most ambitious, a bold rewriting of Roland Kirk's "Black Mystery Has Been Revealed". A series of five-second snatches, drop-ins of Satchmo, Ornette and Marsalis, the track summed up Jazz HipHop's highest seriousness.

This follow-up hints at several futures for HipHop fusion. Gang Starr are back, in duet with the Dream Warriors on "I've Lost My Ignorance (And Don't Know Where To Find It)", and again with Slam Slam on their remix of "Free Your Feelings". The first doesn't really work; it feels clumsy and overstated. The second is something else altogether, a gorgeous, swooning ballad,

made all the more dramatic by its ravines of space, use of echoes and punctuated delay.

Sadly, the titles, sleeve photography and sleeve notes all serve to wrap this emergent scene in a stifling and dated coolness, the notes in particular resolutely anaesthetic as they place the music in "a sense of tradition and a fundamentally funky root...". The idea some of it might represent a break with tradition (or that there might be multiple traditions in active conflict with each other) is firmly resisted. "Dropping the g's off phrases such as smokin' and firin' goes not make these types of music any more authentically soulful," as Letta Jones wrote in *Blues People*.

This quest for "street soul" actually subvertures for any more radical possibility. "Hot Music" by Soho, the other stand out track of the first record, a synopated, hypnotic click-track unlike anything else on the compilation, opened the way for jazz/house fusions like UFO's "Dig That Beat" and V 4 Vision's "Endangered Species". (Even more radically anonymous are the jazz break-beat EPs on Eighthall Records now appearing in London's clubs, where interchangeability and studio-bound blankness challenge the authenticity so sought after in the *Rebirth* packaging.) Another perspective: the soundtrack to *Who Needs A Heart?*, the recent film by the Black Audio Film Collective, provides a jazz entirely stripped of such rhetoric, a music bleeding with the pain of a promise not kept. It's just not clear which path *Rebirth 3* could take, which fusion it will choose to effect.

KIEWO ESHUN

GLEN VELEZ

Doctrine Of Signatures

CMP CD 54 CD

LIKE A cross between ECM and Joe Boyd's Hannibal Records, CMP — marfaring hook 'laid-back music for the Nineties' — mingles left-field jazz and an assortment of authentic and reproto ethaic music in its catalogue. This disc displays two percussion pieces, with the only conventional melodic instrument being a flute that puts in a brief appearance on the shorter work, apart from fitful cross-rhythmic chanting. All the rest is for several players of North African frame drums called the tar, which Velez also plays along with an assortment of percussion instruments from Egypt, Australia, the Philippines and elsewhere. The intricacy of the music is depen-

dent on rhythmic shifts, because there's little dynamic variation, nor much change from basic pulses set out at the outset of the compositions. But though the variation is all in the fine print, it's often a gripping display of drum melody, recorded with as much precision and clarity as it's played, and the ways in which lead drummer Velez drops cuts to the others, or heads off into departsures of his own indicate an enthusiastic improviser. You have to like drums, though — because there ain't much else — and not get fidgety about minimalism.

JOHN FORESHAM

RICKEY WOODARD

California Cooking!

Candell CCD79509 CD/MC

FRANK CAPP TRIO

Presents Ricky Woodard

Concord CCD4469 CD/MC

AT LAST a Young Lion who's not so young; Woodard is now 37, only began making records recently (the Capp is not dated, usually for Concord, but is claimed as his first featured album) and, unlike other neoboppers we hear of, is based in LA instead of New York.

Whether or not the Tennessee native will suffer in promotional and playing prospects from his Western domicile, his sound is appropriately laid-back. Everywhere else, even backward-looking tenorists can't wash that Trane Ride outta their hair, but Woodard's allegiance is clearly to the fellow delegates of the Tenor Conclave such as Zoot Sims, Al Cohn and especially Hank Mobley (with a hint of Johnny Griffin and Mobley again, circa the *Blower's* *Saxophone* period). The light tones of the latter two were often thought of at the time as somehow second-best, but the renewed interest in them betokened a genuine relief that there is after all Another Way.

Both these albums also include Woodard's alto work, which displays the buoyant phraseology of Cannonball, as played by a fan rather than a would-be clone like Vincent Herring. The danger is that someone so obviously "unheavy" is much easier to write off because he's Out To Save The World (From Avant-Gardism), but his talents are quite rare these days. The Concord unfortunately veers towards the "lite", with drummer-leader Capp featuring an unimpressive trio track and a vocal by bassist

Chuck Berghofer(!) Woodard not only gets more space but sounds more mature on the *Candid* (where his only well-known colleague is Tony Dumas on bass) and, all in all, he promises some Serious Fun.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

outlines I

RA! RA! RA!

New Arkestra reissues by John Corbett

"I'M TALKING about something that's so impossible," says Sun Ra, "It can't possibly be true. But it's the only way the world's gonna survive, this impossible thing. My job is to change five billion people to something else. Totally impossible. But everything that's possible's been done by man, I have to deal with the impossible. And when I deal with the impossible and am successful, it makes me feel good because I know that I'm not ballshutrin'!"

Definition of the impossible in jazz terms: the attempt to reissue the El Saturn catalogue. Fortunately, for this task Mr. Mystery has deputized the folks at Evidence Records. Already they have reissued a batch of five of the Saturn LPs on CD, and the plans are to continue *ad infinitum* – a distance possibility given the vastness of the archive . . . that is, the *Ark-ive*. Like Impulse's Saturn reissues in the 1970s, the music is of impeccable quality; except in matters of engineering, it's tough to go wrong with Ra. Unlike the Impulse records, however, these five have excellent notes, full documentation (wherever "possible"), and original Saturn sleeve art. Beautifully restored and remastered from the original tapes, each issue includes a few Ra poems and appropriately psychedelic disc graphics.

Apart from two Transition dates reissued on Delmark, Ra's early work has long lingered in obscurity. Three of Evidence's discs date from before 1960, when the Arkestra was based in Chicago. In fact, seven of the group's really early recordings (once released on Saturn vinyl, backed with mid-70's material), made between 1953 and 1955, are packaged with a rare late-50's LP *Sound Sun Phisare* (ECD 22014). The earlier and most fascinating is a duo version of "Deep Purple", Seuff Smith on violin and Ra on piano and Solovox (simultaneously, like Monk's celeste on "Pannonica"), one of the first proto-synthesizer jazz recordings. (Beat in mind,

Jimmy Smith didn't even turn to organ before 1955!). There's a short piano solo, a bass/piano duet, a great early Ra song called "Dreams Come True", and three standard pop selections crooned by Hattie Randolph, who also adds sparkingly to the larger group work on the disc's later recordings. On these, a 15-piece Arkestra spotlights the schmaltzer side of le Sun, engaging in lush horn arrangements, show-ballads and a lulu take on "I Could Have Danced All Night". Only "Enlightenment", with its bizarre, Afro-Slavic baritone theme, swing charts and cha-cha dance section, would have seemed far out of place in the club environs the band inhabited at that time.

Recorded in 1958, *Jazz In Silhouette* (ECD 22012) is comprised mostly of Ra originals. A nearly identical "Enlightenment" betrays its right score; ten years later, with lyrics, it would become a June Tyson space-anthem, documented live for ESP and the French Shanidar label. Compositional gems here include the showy hard-bopper "Velvee", the odd parallel horn arrangements of "Images", and "Saturn", a beguiling piece with intervals so advanced that it convinced John Gilmore to extend his stay in the Arkestra. The central section of "Ancient Aethiopia" give a formative taste of the flute/piano/percussion panoramas of the Arkestra's future, with extraordinary solos from Ra, whose deep clusters almost break the metric clock, and from wonderful trumpeter Hobart Dootson, a featured soloist throughout.

Cashing cymbals and Jim Herndon's rolling tympani mark *Superior Jazz* (ECD 22015) as more familiar early Ra. Truth is, though, it was recorded two years earlier, in 1956, and it is a good stretch more expansive than *Jazz In Silhouette*, serving less as a set of vehicle for soloing than as evidence of a dogfight with Baron Mingus regarding up-scale ensemble experimentation. The brilliant composition "El Is A Sound Of Joy" is given a more colourful reading than on its Transition counterpart. "Springtime In Chicago" is a city meditation similar to Mingus' smoggy LA-scapes; "India" suggest Ra's ex-cenitric exoticism, while two takes of "Sunology" contain Afro-charts, blues changes, electric piano and firm soloing from Charles Davis on baritone sax. A brief, wild, unaccompanied electric piano composition called "Advice To Medics" is worth a thousand listens. Ra loses two fantastic acoustic piano breaks on "Kingdom Of Not" – like Monk, he somehow finds ways of doing such utterly

strange solo stuff (especially with time), without shutting the group down. And Ra's comping is way up front, snapping thoughts and laying things out for soloists to chew on. On "Blues At Midnight", for example, Ra rides renoman John Gilmore down the line, sparring with him but never getting in his way.

As is the case with most Saturn releases, some debate surrounds the recording date of *Holiday For Soul Dance* (ECD 22011). In his notes, Kevin Whitehead puts a tentative date close to *Sound Sun Phisare*, (roughly 1960), although the original record lists 1968 as its (unlikely) moment of inception. Indeed, the selection is also standards and pop tunes, save the perky "Dorothy's Dance" by cornetist Phil Cohran. But here the orchestration is different, with fragments of the Arkestra (quartets, sextets, etc . . .) presiding in all



but one case. The result is a hotter, less pop sound, with fine blowing by Cohran, Gilmore and alto saxophonist Marshall Allen.

Without a doubt, the oddball of the bunch is *Monorails And Satellites* (ECD 22013), a solo piano outing from 1966. At 33 minutes, it's quite a short disc; too bad they didn't add the second volume of this scarce session to fill it out. Nevertheless, it's a rare pleasure to hear Ra alone at the keys, to hear him pull off the impossible all by himself. Take the rumbling bass chords at the top of "Cogitation" that simply refuse to roll over into boogie woogie, a firm he manages to evoke without playing anything much like it. Or the slow creep from the right side of the keyboard on "The Galaxy Way", with its contrasting parts and open ending. Or the luscious "Skyflight", featuring an intense condensation of balladry. Ra's

genius is not only evident in his composition, arrangement, accompaniment, band-leading, and life philosophy, but also in his performance, as a straight-up pianist. Any way you slice it, these beautiful solos are a must-hear for both neophytes and Ra-ophiles alike.

Standing in the hotel lobby in the Arken's most recent visit to Chicago, Ra reminded alto saxophonist Noel Scott that they'd stayed there before. "Remember?" asked Ra, attempting to spark the young man's recollection. "When we left, the power went out for a week!" No causal link suggested — just the facts, you connect the dots. We can only hope that when Ra disembarks this menabolic vehicle for planes unknown he doesn't take with him the remaining power of a planet whose batteries are already running slightly low. If he does, we may need to turn to these and subsequent Evidence tissues for a recharge.

outlines 2

Mike Atherton examines
the state of the harp.

THE HARMONICA has, over the years, been both a blessing and a curse vis-a-vis the spread of blues music to a wider listening audience. A blessing, because in the hands of a master it expresses the essential melancholy of the music better than other, more expensive and sophisticated instruments ever could; a curse, because it retains an unjustified country-shack back-porch image which led to the music being dismissed as archaic and irrelevant by a generation who never bothered to listen to it. Now the humble harp is back in fashion, and not so humble either, as a batch of recent releases shows.

One of the best (and certainly the most unexpected) is a whole CD of previously unused material by Big Walter Horton, a giant amongst gob-iron artists who never quite garnered the acclaim which he deserved. This may have had a little to do with his avid enthusiasm for alcohol, and some of the vocals on *Live At The El Muanabo 1973* (Red Lightnin' RLCD 0088) are laid-back to the extreme. But there's nothing wrong with his harmonica playing: gliding, swooping and quivering, riding the competent rhythm section or chopping cheekily through it,

Walter's pure, wailing tone is a delight. He works through his crowd-pleasers like "Easy" and "La Cucaracha" as well as a string of instrumentals which amply showcase his innate swing, and also enable him to toss in bits of other people's tunes at will ("Rockin' My Boogie" becomes "St. Louis Blues" for a few precious moments). As for his singing — it's about 70 degrees proof, but this disc is an enjoyable hour's worth as well as being a valuable document.

Horton was at one time the harp player in the Muddy Waters Band, just about the top job in the profession. Two other Waters harpmen also have new CDs out: firstly George "Mojo" Buford, who toured here a couple of years ago, pops up with the British-recorded *Set Of The Blues Harp* (JSP CD 233). Backed by Richard Studholme's fierce little band, the 44 minutes of this set are a good showcase for Mojo: his voice is deep and commanding, and his blowing is upfront, its particular trick is taking a note, distorting it into a freight-train wail and abruptly choking it, to create tension. The strutting "Picking Rags" and the proud "I'm A Bluesman" (based on Muddy's "I'm A Man") are highlights, but there are no lowlights.

James Cotton has had a more high-profile career than Buford, a career which started even before he joined the Waters band, for he cut singles for Sun in 1953/54. The high-energy harpman is currently sidelined following an operation, but he was on top form when, in 1990, he got together in a Texas studio with Waters alumni Luther Tucker, Calvin Jones, Pinetop Perkins and Willie Smith, and other blues stars like ex-Bobby Bland guitarist Wayne Bennett and ex-Howlin' Wolf dierlo Hubert Sumlin. The resulting CD, *Mighty Long Time* (Antone's ANCD 15) is as audible for its crystal-clear sound as for the sparkling performances contained in it. Cotton has first-division sedateness throughout, a dozen good songs which include covers of Muddy and Wolf numbers but avoid the obvious ones, his strong, serrated-edged voice and harp with its enormous tone and fine sense of dynamics do more than justice to "Blow Wind Blow", "Moanin' At Midnight" and a revival of his "Hold Me In Your Arms" which is basically turbocharged rockabilly. There's an uncanny Sonny Boy Williamson imitation, vocally and instrumentally, on "Mighty Long Time", too.

All the preceding artists have links with Chicago, but Jerry McGain has pretty well stayed a Southern man all his days. For 35

years he's recorded a mixture of blues, rock-'n'-roll and crap, and is now with Ichiban who issue *Love Desperado* (ICH 9008). This is real Southern blues, sung by McGain in his laconic drawl punctuated by his drily rhythmic harmonica, with a tight little band grinding along in support. He composes with originality and wit, as shown on "Blues Tribute" and the title track, and he can be topical as on "Burn The Crackhouse Down", a strong anti-drug blues taken at a post-Jimmy Reed lode. But he shouldn't have tackled "Mercy Mercy Mercy", the only non-original track and the only weak one.

William Clarke is a white Californian who has been playing high-class harp for long enough to have shed the tag of a mere imitator. At last signed by a major label, he debuts for them with *Blowing Like Hell* (Alligator ALCD 4788) and proceeds to do just what the title says. His material, largely original, ranges from the jumping R&B of "Lollipop Mama" with its deliciously plunked string bass, through the greasy jazz of "Must Be Jelly" and the rock-'n'-roll march of "Trying So Hard" to the all-out instrumental boogie of the title cut. His voice is workmanlike, but his blowing, with its hard-edged, heavy tone, is hot stuff indeed, bringing the ideas of Little Walter and George Smith into the 90s. Particularly appealing, however, is "Trying Too Hard" which is exactly what he doesn't do: instead, he cools the heat and harks back to Sonny Boy Williamson's tricky 50s style.

Also recommended, but space is running out: Little Sonny's *New King Of Blues Harmonica* and *Hard Going Up*, is big value with 75 minutes of the down-home Detroit on one Snax CD, Charlie Musselwhite's *Signature*, a punchy and well-balanced second Alligator album by the white weasel features lashings of his fluent, broad-toned harp and has John Lee Hooker on one track; and Snooky Pryor's *Too Cool To Move*, a gratifyingly strong 13-tracker from the warm-voiced Chicago veteran with his delightfully back-country harp style features several of the musicians from James Cotton's CD and is also on Antone's.

outlines 3

SPLASC(H)!

Richard Cook listens to new Italian jazz
THE HEROIC efforts of Peppo Spag-

noli to document the flourishing Italian jazz scene, via his Splasch label, have continued without any sign of recession dampening the ardour. Sgr Spagnoli's enthusiasm has run to another 50 or so albums since we last took a dip into these prodigious waters: a staggering achievement by any standard, especially when the overall standard of the music is so consistently high. We salute his efforts – and here's the first of a two-part round-up of some of these records.

There are plenty of new names to add to the imposing list of performers. Claudio Morengi comes from Brescello, away from the acknowledged jazz centres, and his is a suitably small-town music – rather gentle, unemphatic tenor from the leader, and a rhythm section that probably couldn't stand the heat of more demanding settings. But Morengi writes some attractive originals – "One Year" and "Children Turnaround" are very pretty – and there's the doleful "Soul Eyes" which is different to the rote treatment that Mal Waldron's theme usually receives. The CD is *Sky Gatto* (H 347-2).

Also new to me is Massimo Fazio, whose *For Me* (no false modesty here!) (H 337-2) is a corking display of soul-jazz piano à la Milan. "That's How We Like It!" could have been penned by Junior Mance. Then Fazio turns the tables with a long and thoughtfully directed "It's Easy To Remember", sustained even across ten minutes. Flavio Boltrio sits in on trumpet but it's Fazio's impetuous drive that one remembers. Stefano Battaglia is an older hand (age 24!), with earlier Splasch(s) to his credit, but has trio date *Confusion* (H 344-2) has the freshness of a debut: Battaglia insists on a trio conception (bass by the splendid Proflino Dalla Porta, drums by Roberto Gatto) and the three-way momentum of "New Folk Song" or "Whisper Fly" is brilliantly handled. The writing's first-class and Battaglia has a purring, romantic manner which is full of delicate voicings and rushing melody. Battaglia also has an impressive record of duets with Tony Oxley, *Explore* (H 304-2). Not many players sound in thrill to both Jarrett and Taylor, and fewer still could meet Oxley head on and sort him out (sort of), but Battaglia does it. Both records highly recommended.

A few unusual instrumentations crop up in recent issues. Alto saxophonist Furio Romano leads a quintet of sax, trombone, vibes bass and drums for *Danza Delle Streghe* (H 318-2). The music offers echoes of some of Blue Note's conservative-expressionist music, although warmed a little by the



colourful playing: Romano is a pert, amiable soloist, and he's bettered by Rudy Magliardi's peppery trombone and the sparkle of vibist Donato Scolese in four lengthy tracks, including a flavoursome "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat". Enrico Fazio goes for a full-blown Mingus tribute in "Charlie's Angels", which is the showpiece track on *Euphoria* (H 327-2) by his quintet. This is a vivid piece of writing, with ingenious roles for players such as baritone scallywag Carlo Accis Dato, and it's a trait which Fazio sustains all through a funny, thoughtful and pretty impassioned record. A miniature such as "Tilt" gets the same kind of attention put to it, and the soloists respond with knowing enthusiasm.

Antonio Apuzzo leads an amplified troupe for *Electra Draw* (H 343-2), with a couple of guitarists and the leader on alto and reed. Readings of "Ghosts" and "Lonely Woman" are rather stronger than the original material here, which tends to dissolve into sonic scribbles, and the longer pieces are a bit messy. But it's a change from the more prosaic kind of Eurofusion. The *Lo Greco Brothers* move more in that direction for *Full Time* (H 338-2), and I suppose that the various groupings here (the brothers play bass and drums) dawdle through softie-fusion territory a bit, but it's pleasing in its way.

Two discs by December Jazz Trio feature music from Giorgio Occhipinti (piano), Giuseppe Guarrella (bass) and Francesco Branciamore (drums). Like Battaglia's *Confu-*

zion, this is tripartite music, and Branciamore, especially, sets much of the tone and direction of the playing. His solos have a Roach-like intensity of delivery, rolled off an unassuming virtuosity, and he hears orchestrally without interfering with his own sense of swing. Occhipinti can be rather brusque, rapping at chords in a Mal Waldronish manner or suddenly taking off into oblique little runs, but he's balanced by Guarrella's flowing lines and woody sound. In other words, this is a very good trio, and the original material finds a clever trace between free structure and boppy motifs. *The Street One Year After* (H 329-2) is the trio by themselves, and *Concert For Ika* (H 359-2) features the three Sicilians with trumpeter Pino Minafra as guest as a gig in southwest-Italy. Minafra's mercurial solos integrate with few problems.

I mentioned Flavio Boltrio earlier: he turns up on two more records in this batch. Pippo Cataldo (drums) and Giuseppe Costa (bass) head up a septet date for *Phantom Number Two* (H 325-2), with Boltrio, Sandro Satta on alto and two trombonists in Danilo Terenzi and Stefano Sciala. Unfrilly post-bop, with a bit of a Mediterranean shine on it: the brass may be playing familiar figures, but they don't sound much like American neo-cons. Boltrio's in fine shape here, and he also sounds well on Riccardo Fassi's *Toast Man* (H 307-2). Some of these modal settings are a bit aimless, and soloists (the band runs to four or five players) sound as if they're looking for pegs to hang ideas on; Fassi himself, though, punches some tart playing out of his electric keyboards.

Fassi's big group, The Tankio Band, also have a new set called *Nate* (H 345-2). The scores are more friendly than on some of the earlier Tankio records, and there's a light-hearted bounce to the music which seems to emanate from percussionist Alfredo Manetti: "Radio Tunisi" is a funny piece of belly-dancing bop. A couple of tracks outstay their welcome, but otherwise it's very engaging. Finally, Orchestra Il Suono Improvisivo have a self-titled CD (H 355-2) that was sponsored by Venice City Council. The music's composed by Giannantonio De Viciano (his earlier *La Falsa Dell'Orso* was a previous Splasch hit), and although this one again falls victim to a certain amount of wooliness in the scoring, it makes light of a 29-piece band, and some of the section colours are strikingly unusual.

Next month: the new records by Paolo Fresu, Roberto Ottaviano and more.

wirelines

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ZINES continued from page 35

(of *Touch*) and Jon Savage (of *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols & Punk Rock*): I suppose I ought to point out that one of our glorious leaders, Mr Mark Sinker, is a contributor. *Vagabond*, not much about music itself, nonetheless extrapolates from industrial-music ideas about autonomy, communication, refusal, resistance, signal and noise in print rather than sound. There's an interview with the late Martin Hannett, another with one of the defendants in the recent S&M trial, many pieces plugged into this country's curious post-Thatcher dreamstate: the pieces

seem more powerful one by one as if incapable of doing for the moment much more than throwing fragments of illicit feeling or opinion or observation into the air and hoping they land.

Old Time East European proverb: you think you've reached bottom, but you hear a scratching noise, look down, and there's someone at your feet, trying to dig up to daylight. You get the feeling that this world is still scratching at your feet. Maybe it's all part of the net the West will be caught in when it too collapses. Maybe.

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LMC continued from page 27

other hand, the proselytizing desire to give the music some place in the scheme of things."

It's an enduring puzzle that those cross-over elements never developed into a full-blown aesthetic the way that they did in New York with its fervent downtown syncretism. But the LMC could again represent a similar openness. Ed Baxter sees its future as taking into account a different historical moment, a pluralism that maybe doesn't take for granted free music's status as an oppositional form. "I feel that the free music scene is part of a *modernism*, and culture has changed. What used to be a marginal avant-garde activity as it was when people like Evan Parker, Derek Bailey and AMM were thrashing away in the 60s is now in a situation where there are *lots* of marginal activities, lots of things which are *as* avant-garde. Its position in culture is less defined, so it seems to be lacking direction."

What Baxter has in mind is a particular kind of pluralism. "I like *macaronies*, where two different forms are forced together *laminates* where different forms are elided." The LMC's current agenda reflect this. Apart from *Ftuna*, there's been a TV-based event with live music and video sampling, as well as more old guard events like a performance of Tom Phillips' opera *Irma*. Eugene Chadbourne was in last December; he'll be back later, as will Tom Cora, and then there's the week-long festival planned for May, to include Ikue Mori, Nicholas Collins and others.

But the missing link, Nick Couldry feels, is some sort of argumentative voice. He hopes that the currently skimpy LMC newsletter will expand into a magazine proper, to fill the gap vacated by the LMC's old litigious "squabblezine" (as it came to be known) *Musis*. Here is a music currently existing apart from debate – rarely recorded in print, rarely theorised, starving of good polemic. "We need something like Cornelius Cardew's manifesto of the late 60s," says Couldry, "and we need the criticism that followed in the wake of that. It's very difficult to affiliate yourself to a language if you don't have language to talk about it. It's possible, but it'll be different from the language people use to talk about classical music or jazz – it's all to play for."

EVENTS LIKE *Ftuna* might fight free music's invisibil-

ity by stressing the cartoonish elements of things, but the new LMC intends to use this carnivalesque stuff as an entry into the world. Hence Couldry's excitement at the idea of exploring spaces, something a loft-bound body could rarely do (although the Environmental Music Festival in 1978 did just that, taking its cues from land art and similar fields).

"I'm very interested in the LMC working with artists who are interested in the importance of space in people's lives – installation artists who'll take a derelict space and transform it, change the way people think about space. Improvising musicians are doing something similar – they're taking material which can be familiar, but they're doing it fresh, challenging people to listen differently." He sees possibilities in public transport, in bingo hall: "people up the aisles, a choir of people going clickety-click on the boards. These things are possible."

What is possible above all is the chance of pulling people in from outside a centripetal conclave. As Baxter says, "the audience is a productive force in the realisation of music, without which the performance is different. How we get audiences along is a matter of debate."

There may be debate around the Barnum and Bailey spirit that informs events like *Ftuna* ("We don't intend to do a *Novelty Island*," cautions Baxter). But working more visually, more flamboyantly may go some way to healing the discrepancy that's always seemed to exist between Difficult Music, condemned to back rooms, and Difficult Art which, in the form of collections like the current *Doubletake* show, has enough hip cachet to occupy the Hayward Gallery. Why shouldn't improvised music buy into some of that cachet, into the installation boom that's benefitting from the spaces – warehouses, offices, showrooms – left empty and waiting by the economic crash?

Last century, Mallarmé imagined a utopian state of poetry in which "nothing will have taken place but the place itself." This century, Ornette Coleman said, "you must have a certain amount of space, and you put what you want into it". What to put into it may for the moment be a side issue; right now, the promise of playing with that place seems to be the LMC's trump card. And loft-nostalgia notwithstanding, it could be that the more virtual that space is, the better. ■

Ray McKinley post-WWII) and the great, sorely missed, fondly remembered Gil Evans (polished bop for the late '40s orchestra of Claude Thornhill, settings of Evans' own "Blues For Pablo", Brubeck's "The Duke" and Weill's "My Ship" from *Miles Ahead*, trumpeters Virgil Jones and Marvin Stamm evoking David Sanon mawk- or slavishness).

Artistic director and jazz scribe Gary Giddins, with Roberta Swan who runs Cooper Union's Great Hall (sight lines of which are marred by great columns set every few yards) and Loren Schoenberg (music director of this concert, amiable frontman and tenor soloist) really started something when they founded the repertory AJO. Despite the uphill struggle for funds, look who followed suit. Lincoln Centre jazz department's programming isn't always so historical: after its James P. Johnson jubilee in the spring, with Marcus Roberts approximating his stride style and the Concordia Chamber Orchestra essaying his rarely heard symphonic works, came a bristling bop 'n' out Freddie Hubbard-Joe Henderson Big Band (charts by riding-the-critical-crest Joe from '67-'73, as well as new ones by Slide Hampton, Don Sickler conducting) and Betty Carter singing with trios (with Geri Allen, Cecil McBee and Jack DeJohnette as well as her gigging combo), a big band (some new Bobby Watson writing), and strings (as on her Verve reissue of *Whatever Happened To Love?*).

And Carnegie Hall (stirred by producer George Wein) has announced its first jazz series since the New York Jazz Repertory Company of 1974-'75. Trumpeter Jon Faddis will direct a way respectable all-star band in four concerts autumn '92 to spring '93. Dig the hot topics: "Saxophone Summit" with veterans Flip Phillips, Buddy Tate and Stanley Turrentine; "The Legacy Of Miles" (Bob Berg to Joe Zawinul); "Salsa In Jazz" (saluting Tito Puente); "A Tribute To Erroll Garner". Neither the jazz rep movement nor jazz itself is dead—only the cars, courage and/or imaginative capacities of folks who host schedules like this. (Yes, pianist Dick Hyman's Jazz in July at the 92nd Street Y is in its eighth year, and its audience seems delighted with its recall of the past.)

Okay, new stuff ain't happenin' right away. Didn't Gertrude Stein say the new has a stage of ugly? Cellist Dierdre Murray and bassist Fred Hopkins, one hip partnership, worked out at Miller Theatre near Columbia U. first with dreamy vocalist Andy Bey and then edgy electric guitarist Elliott Sharp (drummers for the sets were Newman Baker and Gerry Hemingway, a contrast of power-rhythm and timbral intensity). They were *striving*. But pursuing the new begot Elvin Jones, at the blue Note with Sonny Fortune, Ravi Coltrane, 19-year-old trumpeter Nicholas Payton, pianist Willie Pickens, bassist Chip Jackson—wharaband! And if Haitian guitarist Alix "Titi" Pascal was soft with drummer Andrew Cyrille and Hopkins, we got the multicultural idea. Next time it works.

Yeah, it's worth going out now and then. ■

"I didn't want to go out and just sing anything to make a living, I wanted to sing jazz. I knew that if I worked an office job it would enable me to look after my daughter and support myself, and I kept the music alive in me by taking gigs on the side. That way, I knew when people called me that it was for the music I sang."

By the time she took that plunge, Jordan had also conquered her addiction to both alcohol and drugs.

"I can't blame the jazz world for my addiction—I take full responsibility. I had very low self-esteem, and I came from a family where almost everybody had a very serious drinking problem, and my mother died from the disease. Working in clubs didn't help, I guess, especially if a couple of shots helped to get you over your lack of confidence."

"I would be dead now if I hadn't stopped. I had a spiritual awakening—I got a very loud and clear message that if I wanted to keep on with music, then I had to quit the other stuff. You have to respect the gift you have for music, but it is very hard to give up alcohol, because it is a disease, and I learned to treat it that way."

"It's twelve years since I stopped drinking, and I haven't drugged in six. I was never into grass anyway, it made me too paranoid, but I used uppers, and that takes its toll on you."

"I was one of the fortunate ones—a lot of jazz people have died through drugs and alcohol. I see them today and I think 'oh, you don't know what you're doing,' but they wouldn't listen any more than I would have done, and sometimes you think you're better than you are if you go out there high. To quit, though, you really have to have the desire to do it."

IRONICALLY FOR an entirely self-taught singer, Jordan also devotes time to teaching, including a workshop at City College in New York which began in 1978, as well as being a member of the faculty of the Jazz in July programme at The University of Massachusetts.

"I teach them all the things that I didn't know—how to count off a tune, what intros are, endings, repertoire, preparing charts, how to sing over chord changes, and also how to get to their own feelings. I try to take the fear out of getting up and doing it."

"When I was starting out, Bird would get me up to sing at gigs—he was very open like that. I didn't even know what keys I was singing in—God, when I think about it now! That's what I teach now—know your keys, know your range, and there I was back then just getting up and doing it whichever way!"

"The workshop has been very successful, I have to say, and I give myself credit for that, because it was me who started it and developed it. I am not in competition with these kids. My primary purpose is to get them in touch with the music, and I know I am teaching well when I get the same feeling as I do when I am connecting with musicians on the bandstand." ■

Rare AND Fine

- *1 **Steve Lacy**, Eric Dolphy, Harold Land, Rex Blake, John Stevens, Max Roach.
- 12 **Alto Jazz**, Lawrence Anderson, Chris McGregor, Phil Minton & Roger Turner.
- 18 **Sonny Rollins**, Tommy Chase, Jayne Cortez, Bobby McFerrin, Stanley Jordan, Bertrand Tavernier, Joe Farrell.
- 19 **Ornette Coleman**, Charlie Haden, Steve Lacy, Slim Gaillard, Jazz Caravan.
- 41 **Art Blakey**, Hank Mobley, Gwladys Tins, Bobby Watson, Wynton & Branford Marsalis.
- 21 **Chet Baker**, Pirelli Zoo, Jamsiladen Yacana, Chacho Valdes & Arturo Sandoval, Phil Wachsmann, Michael Nymann, Nils-Erik Ericson.
- 22 **John Coltrane**, James Blood Ulmer, The Giant Suen, Ruben Blades, Nathan Davis.
- 23 **Bill Laswell**, Luce Takti, Celia Cruz, Anita O'Day, Alan Bach, Arvo Lehty.
- 24 **Betty Carter**, Jeremy Smith, Paul Baby, John Abernethy, Susan Baker, Maggie Nicolo, Vienna Art Orchestra.
- *25 **Courtney Pine**, Paul Motian, George Coleman, Luciano Berio, Gerry Mulligan.
- *30 **Chico Freeman**, Alex von Schlippenbach, Eddie Harris.
- 32 **Django Bates**, Dewey Rubins, Tony Oxley, Diamanda Galas, Weather Report.
- 33 **Sonny Rollins**, Dave Brubeck, The Beat, John Russell.
- 34/35 **Lester Bowie**, Branford Marsalis, Dexter Gordon, Serge Chaboff, Luce Takti, Paul Lytton & Paul Lovens, Frank Zappa.
- 36 **Steve Williamson**, Philip Best, Bill Frazell, Art Farmer, Tishmon Kinsale.
- 37 **Bobby McFerrin**, Hampton Hawn, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, John Lurie.
- 38 **Wynton Marsalis**, Wayne Shorter, Nigel Kennedy.
- 39 **Andy Sheppard**, Gil Evans, Sheila Jordan, Tadd Dameron.
- 40 **Ornette Coleman**, Charlie Haden, Charlie Rouse, Robert Ashley.
- 41 **The Monks**, Steve Coleman, Steve Swallow, Kenny, Tommy Smith.

The following are still available (* indicates very few copies remain):

- 42 **Horace Silver**, Bud Shank, Xen Stringly, Barney Wilson.
- 43 **Pat Metheny**, Robert Johnson, Albert Collins, Charles Mariano, Indy Fingers.
- 44/47 **Courtney Pine**, Cecil Taylor, Roland Kirk, Mike & Kate Westbrook, Box Briderbecke, Bala Gonzalez.
- 48 **Joe Henderson**, Krzyz Olmer, Wayne Marsh, Herbie Leonard, Harold Budd, Dave Lubman.
- *49 **Julian Herppell**, Frank Morgan & Mike Store, Billy Jenkins, Clark Tracy, Alena Kaba.
- *50 **David Holland**, Tommy Smith, 50 Days, Italian Jazz.
- 51 **Marilyn Crispell**, Andy Kirk, Roland Perrin, Gal Evans, Dianne Richmond, Caprice Brimmar.
- 52 **Sonny Rollins**, Ed Blackwell, Hank Roberts, Martin Archer, Ornette Coleman.
- 53 **John Scofield**, Chet Baker, John McLaughlin, Johnny Hodge, Van Freeman, Elliott Sharp.
- 54 **Jason Rebello**, Jimmy Roscoe, Bob Stewart, Defunkt, Adelaide Hall.
- 55 **David Sanborn**, Booker Little, John Lurie, Iannis Xenakis, Lou Gare.
- 56 **Composers**, Carla Bley, John Cage, Maika Meigsberg, Judith Weir, Mike Gibbs.
- 57 **Bird**, Billy Bang, Donno Gonzalez, Charles McPherson, Red Rodney.
- *60 **Andy Sheppard**, Jack DeJohnette, Lionel Hampton, Odaline de la Martinez.
- *62 **Paul Reid**, Henry Threadgill, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Jack McLean, Sergey Koryakbin, Nina Mac McKinney.
- *63 **Duke Ellington**, Billy Strayhorn, Bitch Morris, Orphy Robinson, Harry Connick, Roy Eldridge.

A complete collection of back issues of *The Wire* is a prized archive indeed: with many issues out of print and many more now very low in our back issue storeroom, now is definitely the time to fill in gaps before many key issues are gone forever into private collections.

Louis Sahavi, Sissi Hamilton, Eno.

- 81 **Andy Summers**, Steve Coleman, Art Blakey, Miles On Record - 2, Joe Zawinul, Jaxon Robble.
- *82/83 **Quincy Jones**, Cecil Taylor, Ralph Peterson, John Gilmore, Miles On Record - 3, Snick Hansen & Walkman, Film Music.
- *84 **European Jazz**, Eberhard Weber, Django Reinhardt, FMP, Pierre Boulez.
- *85 **Louis Moholo**, Evan Parker, Steve Reich, Buster Williams, Dean's Charles Parker, Jon Cox.
- 86 **John Coltrane**, Jon Mitchell, Herb Albert, Chicago, Marilyn Crispell, Dick Heckstall-Smith.
- 88 **Michael Jackson**, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Elva Costello, Abdullah Ibrahim, David Byrne, John Coltrane.
- 89 **John Lee Hooker**, Krzyz Olmer, Michael Brecker, Igor Stravinsky, Greg Oby, Natalie Cole.
- 90 **Prince**, Frank Zappa, David Sanborn, Elliott Carter, Barbara Doremus.
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- 93 **Punk celebration**, Jah Wobble, Eric Dolphy, Punkjazz, Buddy Gay, The Garbage, Wire.
- 94/95 **Great Black Music**, Wynton Marsalis, Louis Armstrong, Motown, Les Cole & Public Enemy, Madrugada Muller, Arthur Blium, Taj Mahal.
- 97 **Laurie Anderson**, Billie Holiday, Diamanda Galas, My Bloody Valentine, Vanessa Naïmova.
- 98 **Giorgio Moroder**, Buddy Rich, Rashad Ali, Victor Lewis, Thelma Laper, Allan Berg (+ free CD!)

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IN A (CYBER) FUNK

I AM, perhaps inexplicably, distressed by a couple of the statements Brian Morton made in his article *Metal Maribus Musings* in the February issue. Amazing is his idea that people find the idea of a computer composing "utterly, unutterably unacceptable," for which I read, between the lines, that people are frightened by the possibility. I also find his claim that "instruments are the music" anxiety-producing.

Why the emotional reaction? I think it is because I am a composer and a musician, equally involved in acoustic and electronic technologies and techniques. I recognise and promote the idea that music is organised sound, order out of chaos, and in those terms then the ideal realm of the computer. And, equally obvious, is the fact that instruments produce sound, music's medium. But music doesn't come from either order or sound. It comes from love and lust and loneliness, exhilaration and anguish, being drunk, high, sober and sick, from passions and obsessions; the source is human experience, which is not only unique to the race but also to each individual. That is the greatness of art, and the reason why, although there may only be 12 tones (or 40, depending on who you ask), there will always be something new in music. And, perhaps sadly, why computer music will always fail; it may be endlessly

THE WRITE PLACE

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fascinating and quirky on a technical, intellectual plane, but aesthetically futile and bankrupt. We have nothing to fear from machines making music because they, truly, never will. We should pity poor Lt. Commander Dada, for though he may imitate Paganini or Cecil Taylor, he will never know the abyss of the daemonic.

GEORGE GRELLA, Rochester, NY, USA

All well and good, but Altern-8 are still better than George Winton - MS.

IN TRIBUTE TO SAM

INTERESTING PIECE on Black British TV, but I must deplore the absence of a mention for the great (and now sadly late) Sammy Davis Jr. Sam's one-man BBC specials in the early 60s were a crucial viewing experience for me, the first entertainer I can remember seeing on the box who made any kind of impression on my youthful consciousness — and at a time when, as Stephen Bourne points out, the *Black And White Minstrel Show* was in full, tragic swing. The

whim of Sam must be acknowledged!

ROGER WILBEY, Plymouth.

ANDERS ACROSS THE SEA

IN YOUR review of Jan Kaspersen's new CD (issue 98) you write about trumpeter Anders Bergcrantz and say that he is "world class, and if he weren't from Denmark, a lot more people would say so".

I'm happy to inform you that Anders is not from Denmark but from Sweden, living in Malmö. Aside from his own quintet, he is heard with Tolvan Big Band and several other groups, including a few from Denmark. He has also been playing in New York from time to time: this February, he appeared for three nights at Sweet Basil with his own band, including Rick Margitza on tenor sax, Richie Beirach on piano, Ron McClure on bass and Adam Nussbaum on drums. Two evenings were recorded by Dragon Records and a CD is to be released in August. In November, Anders will make a tour of Sweden (and hopefully some other European countries) with his New York-based quintet.

LARS WESTIN, Stockholm.

Thanks at all times to Lars (who loses Dragon) for the information, and apologies to Anders for my gaffe. British promoters, please copy! - Ed.

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● Programme 2: Thursday 21 May
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Naresh Kaul + Mick Ritchie

Highlights include Sainkha Namtchalak, the extraordinary Mongolian throat-singer; from NY's downtown scene, mutant-trumpet from Ben Neill with sampling trombone from Nic Collins; electronic percussionist Ikuu Mori (founder of seminal No Wave band DNA) and Belgium vocalist Catherine Janniaux (of Akzak Maboul, The Ex, Test Dept, &c); Media Luz, a new inter-continental string group formed by Aleksander Kalkowski, with Phil Minton (voice), Stefano Lavarini (violin) and Paola Grassi (bass); from Washington, prodigious saxophonist Jeffrey Morgan, accompanied by punk-jazz drummer Paul Hession and, from Germany, Klaus Wilmsen on bass.

● Programme 3: Friday 22 May
Ikuu Mori + Catherine Janniaux
Garden Of Noise
Orchestra Murphy
David Watson

Scarcely less noteworthy, from Britain the Festival boasts some of the key figures from the contemporary free improvisation scene: Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, John Stevens, Vanessa Mackness, Barry Guy, Lou Gare and Alan Tomlinson, alongside relative newcomers like Garden Of Noise and Ghosts Before Breakfast - plus performers testing the limits of popular music: singer/songwriter Peter Blegvad, Die, Trip Computer, Die! (featuring the legendary Anni) and Orchestra Murphy. All in all, the Festival presents a staggering cross-section of virtuoso players, leading-edge practitioners of the local underground and global avant-garde.

● Programme 4: Saturday 23 May
Peter Blegvad
Lou Gare + David Sawyer
ARC + No Mean Feat
Die! Trip Computer, Die!

● Programme 5: Sunday 24 May
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Vanessa Mackness + Barry Guy
Clive Bell + Steve Beresford + Mark Sanders
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